













IT IS LATER THAN YOU THINK

•

THE NEED FOR A MILITANT DEMOCRACY

1943 EDITION

ALSO BY MAX LERNER

IDEAS ARE WEAPONS  
DEAS FOR THE ICE AGE

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1943 EDITION

**BY MAX LERNER**

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**1943**

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**To my daughters**

**Constance, Pamela, Joanna,**

**who will have a hand in deciding the outcome**



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## FOREWORD

From week to week, for three years, I have as an editor stumbled around among the trees of contemporary issues, bumping my head and scratching my shins. In this little book I seek to take my revenge—an attempt to draw a map of the forest. I think of it as an essay in the philosophy and tactic of democratic collectivism.

There is nothing in the world today so perilous and exciting as the adventure of democracy, and nothing so dull as a book on democracy. That dullness is, of course, partly the occupational disease of writers on government; but it is mainly the outcome of the need we have felt for making democracy such a good thing, like a scrubbed and shining schoolboy. Actually democracy partakes of the sweat and blood of the real world. It is grimy and dangerous and will never survive until it can learn to understand the ways of bullies and take its own part. I happen to care for it not because of any moral perfection it may have, but because it is by and large the best instrument I know for giving us the kind of world we want to live in.

But every instrument of government is a double-edged sword; and if we want to grasp this one firmly and wield it lustily our wrists must be strong. We have heard a good deal

recently from the traditional liberals about the "neo-liberalism" of my own intellectual generation, and its betrayal of the classic liberal principles. I, for one, am conscious of no such betrayal. What has happened is that liberalism, which has been trying for decades to go along as a body of ideals on an impossible economic and political base, is now changing its base. I hope that I shall have my small part in this necessary construction job.

The base we want to build our liberalism on is a democratic collectivism. The great political battle of our generation is the battle over what democracy means and how it can survive. The great political task of our generation is the task of giving economic content to democracy and of keeping power in a collectivism from becoming tyrannical. I do not believe it can be done by liberal slogans alone. It will be apparent to the reader before he has read many pages that I am far more a democrat than I am a liberal. The distinction between the two is an important distinction. And until we learn to make that distinction more sharply than we have done we shall never fashion a militant and disciplined democracy. Which is to say that our next meeting-place may be in a concentration camp or on a battlefield.

If there is any passion in this book, it is the passion for making democracy militant enough and collectivism democratic enough to survive. If there is any thinking in it, it is thinking about the conditions of that survival. If there is any vision, it is the straining to pierce the future for the utmost possibilities of a democratic and humanist culture.

And if there is any sense of urgency, it is because I am convinced that for starting vigorously on all these tasks it is later than you think.

# HOW LATE DID IT PROVE? ( 1943 )

1. *The Anatomy of Survival*
2. *The Revolutionary Cycle*
3. *Plato's Cave Today*
4. *Only a Great People*
5. *World Image and World Order*

## 1. THE ANATOMY OF SURVIVAL

WHEN this book was first published in 1938, it was regarded as a tract for the times—an impression which its title and its note of tension reinforced. Yet in writing it I aimed beyond the urgencies of the immediate moment to the urgencies of our whole era. That is why I am happy that this new edition enables me to extend the analysis to the events of the intervening years. In doing this it has seemed better to leave the original text unchanged, as it stood when I wrote the book on the eve of the Second World War, and to content myself with adding postscripts to all but one of the chapters and with writing a new introductory chapter. My aim has been to leave the book an organic whole, but to make it more useful to the reader and student who comes to it with questions drawn from the experience of the past five years.

I write these pages at the turn of the war tide. It is, in Winston Churchill's words, not the beginning of the end, but at least the end of the beginning. Despite the crippling of its great industrial strength by successive Nazi attacks since June 1941, Russia has managed not only to hold fast at Stalingrad but even to develop a counter-offensive power. General Rommel's Afrika Korps has been rolled back from Egypt by the British Eighth Army under General Montgomery. A large American expeditionary force under General Eisenhower has, in its North African landings and operations, shown that the American military technicians have mastered the arts of the *Blitzkrieg*, and added to it American daring and the American

genius for organization. The ground has been prepared for a continued air assault on Hitler's domain from both the south and north, to be followed in the calculable future by an invasion of the continent by land armies. After a decade of almost uninterrupted Nazi victories, we are finally coming to grips with the Nazi power on something better than even terms.

Beyond these military considerations there is one transcending fact which lays the basis for a victory in the war and a possible democratic future in the post-war world. That fact is the emergence of the United Nations. There was no such fact to be reckoned with in 1938, when America, Britain, and France were still following a policy of "non-intervention" in the fascist conquest. After that the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the assault on Poland, Dunkirk, the fall of France, the attack on Russia, and Pearl Harbor came in staccato succession to make up the "dark catalogue of our public misfortunes." But however deep the wounds thus inflicted upon the common cause, the fact is that nations with widely divergent social systems and traditions are today committed to a struggle to the death against the fascist enemy. If England had fallen in 1940 before Russia and America were in the war, there might have been no chance to form this common front. If Russia had fallen in 1941, before America had taken its long strides toward rearmament and Britain had built up its air forces, the chances of the ultimate destruction of the fascist power might again have vanished.

It is a ravaging thought that doom brushed us so closely. But it is almost certain now that we have escaped it. There may still be a long and hard road ahead of us in the immediate future, as the price of our delays and mistakes during the whole past decade. Nevertheless the most massive potential strength that has ever been assembled in a coalition war is now assembled against the fascist cause. The big question mark

about the future is whether we can make that strength effective in rebuilding the shattered world. It is again a question of timing. Civilization today is a race between political warfare and catastrophe.

But while we cannot pierce the future, we can squeeze some meaning from the experience of the past. There is a prime question with which the historians of the present World War will have to grapple. I do not refer to the causes of the war—that perennial stamping-ground of the historian's art. I refer rather to the enigmatic conduct of the nations against whom the cold fascist fury was directed. One question is why they were so unequipped to meet the Nazi assault. And the other is why, despite this lack of preparation, they nevertheless finally whipped together a resolve to see the war through.

In answering the first question one can write, as F. L. Schuman has done, the whole grim record of "the diplomacy of Nemesis" during the years between the episode at the Marco Polo Bridge and the assault on Poland. One can tell the story in class terms, emphasizing the blindness of the "old Conservatives" to the dangers of a movement which promised the smashing of European labor strength in return for the passive acquiescence of the owning groups. One can tell it, as MacLeish, Mumford, Frank, and Brooks have done, as the story of the moral irresponsibility of those who have posed as our spokesmen and leaders.

Each of these has its value. My own suggestion is that we were unequipped to meet the Nazi assault because of a triple failure on our part—a failure of knowledge, a failure of belief, a failure of will. These failures were related to the deep cleavage between our democratic pretensions and our social actualities. They were failures of our intellectual and governing *élites* fully as much as of the common man. They were in the deepest sense failures in the art of politics.

The failure of knowledge was encouraged and sanctioned by those in and out of our educational system who feared that knowledge might be dynamite. The failure of belief must be set down to the curious cult of neutrality which grew up in the shadow of science. We aimed at the de-emotionalizing of our social life, at squeezing it dry both of ideals and of passionate convictions—as if the human personality could be split in two, and the personal side allowed the luxury of belief while the political and social sides were austere denied it. This too was encouraged by the holders of power, who knew in an instinctive way that their positions were secure so long as the people around them played with politics as with a game of political counters, and believed in nothing passionately enough to fight for it. The poets had pierced through the fallacy of this long before the politicians and the educators. William Butler Yeats, as early as 1923, had foreseen what would happen when

*the best lack conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Finally, the failure of will, symbolized for our whole generation by the figure of Neville Chamberlain returning from Godesberg, must be set down to a pair of correlated forces. On the one hand, the sense of frustration which the impact of international anarchy and internal collapse left upon the rank and file; and on the other hand, the entrenchment of oligarchies in power which were themselves either too terrified to act, or willfully blind to action which might endanger their position.

This analysis is a partial one because it runs too much on the psychological level. Yet the fact is that, without any shift in the base of power, there has been a drastic change of mood in anti-fascist countries since Munich and the Nazi-Soviet pact. This change of mood makes more sense if you study it



as a problem in political psychology than if you study it as a problem in the conflict of classes or the struggle for power. That America and Britain were too bemused to see the shape of things to come and too paralyzed to act was the great cloud that blackened the decade of the nineteen-thirties. That they were able finally to rouse themselves from their deep dream of security, achieve a measure of internal cohesion, and merge their strength with that of Russia and China in a United Nations war will surely be the great fact that will determine the skies of the nineteen-forties. It could not have happened had there not been a clearer knowledge, a deeper belief, a stronger will among common men and ruling groups alike.

How to explain this change? A class analysis would say quite simply that the capitalist ruling groups saw they had miscalculated, and accordingly changed their direction; that they had counted on a strong Nazi Germany as a buffer against the world movement toward socialism, and the buffer had become a juggernaut that turned upon them to destroy them. This sheds light on why Chamberlain in England and Daladier in France finally went to war after the shameful years of appeasement. But does it shed light on why neither government fought the war hard? Or why—when the Blitz came—it required a Churchill to energize British strength? Or why this Churchill and the group around him had from the start approached world affairs in terms of national rather than class interest?

Or take your “common sense” observer, who usually conceals a cynical conservatism behind the mask of his common sense. He will show you how easy the whole problem is. It was later than the democracies thought because mass governments are not very bright or quick; when they finally saw the danger, their strength was the natural and desperate reaction of nations at bay, fighting for their very lives. It is a plausible answer, yet it raises more questions than it resolves. Why was

it exactly the democratic rather than the capitalist elements in the capitalist democracies who long ago saw the meaning of the fascist thrust at world empire? And, among the capitalists, how explain the difference in vision and resolve between the Chamberlains of the world and the Churchills of the world? And as for final resistance being natural, not every people that is threatened with extinction manages to rouse itself to fight for survival. France must remain a melancholy memorial of that fact. Even in the most cynical and "common sense" terms, a war for survival implies the existence of forces with roots so deep that even the sudden assault, the war of nerves, the tactics of civil war, the strategy of terror cannot overcome them.

We must look elsewhere for our answers—toward the nature of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements and finally the nature of the human psyche. Let us say at the start that, however shrewd were Hitler's calculations of the weak points in the armor of the democratic world, he miscalculated in the end because he saw the weaknesses and missed seeing the strength. As we learn more about Hitler and the "men of chaos" around him, it becomes clear that in this respect, for all their far-seeing schemes, they made the error of all revolutionary adventurers: their will to power gave them a flashing insight into the dark and rotten reaches of the world they lusted to conquer; but the light that reveals may also dazzle, and the Nazis were blind to the forces in that world which would resist and hold. They overestimated the force of class tenacity in capitalist democracies as against the force of national pride and democratic instinct. They did not reckon with the organic continuities of history, which are the truly conservative forces in our life. Least of all did they reckon with the potential strength of the democratic idea, and with the new vitality it could take on once it had been shaken loose from the fetters of minority complacency by the impact of

the war itself. It was against these determinants of history, intangible enough and yet armed with irresistible power when linked with material and human resources, that they pitted themselves. They did not reckon with the life force as against the death impulse.

## 2. THE REVOLUTIONARY CYCLE

But to give substance to these generalizations about history and the human mind, we must look more closely at the process of revolution and counter-revolution. It has become a truism by now, for those whose minds are not wholly impervious to the world outside, that the war must be seen as part of a global revolution. That revolution issued from the incapacity of an anarchic world of capitalist nation-states to avoid economic breakdown and annihilating wars. It began in the March and October days in Russia in 1917; it has not yet run its course. The rulers of England and France and—until the New Deal—of America tried to act as though the cracks in the economic structure were only the invention of malcontents, and the claims of ordinary men upon decent living standards were only the shibboleths of visionaries. Their retreat from reality was complete and, in the nature of things, as it should be: one could scarcely have expected anything else of them. The Russian Revolution survived both their complacencies and their hatreds.

Every revolution in time evokes counter-revolutionary energies, and this one was no exception. The counter-revolution had its tentative rehearsals in the brutalities of German, Finnish, and Hungarian "White Guards" in 1919-1921 and of the Italian "Black Shirts" in 1923. It had its full-dress rehearsal in the rise of the Nazi party and its accession to power

in 1933. And it raised the curtain on its world première in the wars, undeclared and declared, with which the Nazis darkened the rest of the Thirties. The thrust at world empire which the Russian Revolution had been unable or unwilling to make was now made by the fascist counter-revolution. And the very nature of this counter-revolution was a commentary both on the non-revolutionary image of the capitalist democracies and on the revolutionary image of Russia. For, despite the fact that oligarchic groups within the capitalist democratic systems countenanced and even encouraged the career of Nazi violence, the contrast between their relative passivity and the willful brutality of the Nazis showed that in the uneasy partnership between capitalism and democracy there was a deterring influence upon the extreme energies of the former as well as the latter. Moreover, the savagery of the Nazi attack on Russia revealed what should have been apparent before: that, despite the Soviet dictatorship and the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, the inner meaning of the revolutionary movement that began in Russia lay in the broadening and deepening of the democratic potential in politics.

This may shed some light on the fate that the Nazi thrust at world power encountered. Hitler's movement was counter-revolutionary, but it was none the less a phase—if a deeply negative phase—of the whole revolutionary cycle. And because it was inherently tied up with the world war which Hitler started, that phase became the revolution. It therefore had to meet the resistances that every revolution must meet. I have pointed out in the second chapter of this book that fascism was fed and strengthened by the deeply reactionary elements in our own capitalist society. But it is now worth adding, in the perspective of 1943, that the conservative continuities of the same society could be invoked against the fascist revolution as well as for it. There was not only Chamberlain; there was also Churchill. There was not only Hoover;

there was also Willkie. There was not only Daladier; there were also Herriot and DeGaulle. The "old Conservatives," to use Guenter Reimann's phrase, were so shaken by their fear of socialism that they allowed their will to be paralyzed by the Nazis. But conservatism as a force was not thereby exhausted. If Hitler thought that the conservatives would give him at least a passive acquiescence, both Churchill and Willkie stand as striking symbols of his Himalayan miscalculation.

But a counter-revolution like Hitler's evokes not only conservative resistance when it reaches its military phase; it evokes also new revolutionary energies. Here too the picture is a complex one. The first impact of what Archibald MacLeish has called "the revolution against" is on the intellectuals and social adventurers of the "wave of the future" stripe, who rally to the new cause because it feeds on their hatreds or their sense of grievance or their megalomaniac will to power. In America we have seen instances of this unstable marginal type in men so diverse as Lawrence Dennis, Charles Lindbergh, William Dudley Pelley, Huey Long, Colonel Robert McCormick. Such men welcome social upheaval for what they can get out of it, and because of their certitude that in a volcanic world they can land on their feet. There is even a sense in which this social adventurism and will for novelty represent a potential sadistic strain in many young people, particularly in the marginal middle classes; and to that extent the *élite* appeal in Nazism must always be a danger. The war has driven this strain underground, but we shall have to reckon with it in one form or another in the time to come.

But this initial impact of a counter-revolutionary thrust is not the end of the story. There are often new energies that are enlisted against it. Despite the strains of liberal passivity and socialist pacifism and the fateful period of communist isolationism, it became clear toward 1940 that the strongest currents of the will of labor and the professional groups were in

an anti-fascist direction. The men and women who are most truly functional in our society in the sense that they do its work and perform its services could never, for all the mistakes of their leaders and spokesmen, have lined up with the fascists. But their resistance might have proved futile and dispersed, had not the shock of the Nazi successes aroused the deepest democratic energies in America, Britain, China, Latin America, to a new pitch of moral resolution. The Nazi war assault brought into being the potentials of a democratic world revolution.

It was these twin impulses in Western culture—the impulse toward continuity with the past and the impulse toward equality in the future—which the Nazis had to meet, joined in a partnership against a foe who would destroy the world of both. That partnership became in effect the “Popular Front” of the war period, although the name was never used. Hitler’s best chance of preventing this fusion of strength was to play off each strain against the other until it was too late for them to join, and then to present each with the *fait accompli* of his insurmountable armed might. The first was the strategy of civil divisions and disunion. The second was the strategy of a *Blitzkrieg* against a succession of enemies, so swiftly consummated that no one of them could raise itself until too late.

The strategy of civil disunion worked in Austria, Spain, and to the hilt in France. It did not work in Russia, England, America. The strategy of the *Blitzkrieg*, after shattering initial successes in Poland, Norway, the Low Countries, and France, proved a failure in September 1940 when England roused itself after Dunkirk and, hurling back the massed formations of Goering’s *Luftwaffe*, forced the Nazi generals to give up their designs of taking their invasion across the channel water jump. It proved a failure again in 1941 when Russia pushed back the mechanized forces of the *Wehrmacht* from Moscow; and in 1942 when the epic defense of Stalingrad and the

counter-attacks along the whole front stood as a symbol of Russian military preparedness and national strength. It proved a failure again in December 1941 when America, although it was grievously unprepared for the blows struck at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines by Hitler's ally, Japan, nevertheless was only aroused by them to greater energies; so that in 1942, while fighting something better than a deadlock war in the Pacific, we were able to land a mighty force in North Africa and perhaps turn the tide of the European war.

In Russia the Nazis found a militant nation whose strands of strength were closely woven together: peasants whose character had been formed over the centuries, as Sir John Maynard has pointed out, as "land-sailors" over the wide tracts of the Eurasian plains, and whose turbulent self-reliance had been disciplined to community living in the pre-Soviet *mir* and the Soviet collective farm; workers who had learned how to harness industrialism to the needs of a new conception of life which they were forging, a mass army alert to the most recent military technology and toughened by years of training; a leadership made up of a new type of conservative radicals, as illusionless about the intangibles of international politics as about the tangibles of the machine process and mass organization; a people which as a whole had hated fascism even during the period when its governing group had been compelled to temporize with it. In England the Nazis encountered a heritage of freedom joined with the pride of former world mastery; an imperial tradition which had been weakened, but somehow also transformed into something potentially stronger by the popular upsurge of the passion for equality; a people brought up with the instinct not to know when they were supposed to be licked. In America the Nazis encountered a nation which had once been the New World and which, although complacent in its achievements, had not wholly forgotten that fact; a people with a knowledge of the industrial

arts which could be turned from the acquisitive impulse to the impulse for national survival; a social system in which the holders of economic power had not become so totally blind to the Western tradition of freedom as to scrap it in the crisis moment; a political system with a progressive Administration that symbolized for the world that democracy was still fertile in exploring new economic strategies and administrative techniques; a people who were a Gulliver just beginning to rouse himself and find his true stature.

These three peoples—the American, British, Russian—were the three great industrial powers of the world outside of Germany and Japan. Along with China and India they were the massive reserves of the man power of the world, the storehouses of its culture and its ideals, the creative nations as well as the great nations. As the Nazis and Japanese had failed to destroy their internal unity, so they failed to head off the process by which they were now fusing their strength. Even the attack on Russia, the trump card for dressing the war up as a crusade against the diabolism of Marxian ideas, failed almost wholly to deceive even the holders of social power. For by that time England and America were irrevocably committed to the war and were tied to Russia not only by the common heritage of humanism but also by bonds of sheer self-interest and military protection.

All this has been a rather complex way of reasserting with conviction what I had said prayerfully when I wrote this book five years ago: that the survival impulse within the democratic peoples of Europe and America had not been extinguished by the mistakes they had made; that while it was fearfully late, there was still time for the thought that clarified, the faith that roused, the action that hammered thought and faith into reality. From Russia to America to China, from Alaska to Brazil, we found the key which unlocked our energies.



But we must not take too great a pride in our accomplishment. It represents a beginning, not a fruition. The fact is that neither Russia nor America entered the war by her own act of will, although it took will to remain in it. The fact is that we learned with ravaging slowness during the whole decade before the war. The fact is that, while there is a large measure of internal cohesiveness both in England and America, neither people has yet organized its war resources with maximum effectiveness, and in neither country have the military and economic commands shown the qualities of daring and imagination on a grand scale. The fact is that, while we have formed the United Nations as a working conception, we have not yet transformed them into a co-ordinated mechanism for a global war, on the military, economic, political, and ideological planes.

### 3. PLATO'S CAVE TODAY

These tasks must not be minimized. Even the Germans and Japanese, whose methods are hidden by the dark pall that enshrouds everything about a fascist country, have had their difficulties and have made costly blunders. Historians will cite three of major stature. The Japanese blundered a decade ago in attacking China and thus awakening and uniting against them a tenacious strength, and in addition splitting what might have been a solid Eastern phalanx against the West. The Nazis in their arrogance blundered by treating the conquered European countries as vassals to be exterminated, thus arousing the full potentials of inner resistance. And they blundered again in attacking Russia, thus taking on a massive task while England and America were given further time to prepare. Despite these errors, however, total war for the fascists

has been more compassable because, for Germany and Japan alike, it has been mainly a matter of the expansion of an imperium and its absorption of new resources and new tasks. The democratic powers, on the other hand, have had the task of fighting a coalition war, of welding together a collection of free nations among whom there has had to be agreement on objectives, pooling and allocation of resources, division of functions, meeting of minds on grand strategy.

In this context the war has presented for America a sequence of four broad phases. First, there was the task of getting into the war. We had to throw our strength in with that of the other nations who were lining up against world fascism. Given our military, political, economic, psychological, and moral state of unpreparedness, this "road to war" was not as greased a slide as it used to be depicted in the literature of disillusionment during the Long Armistice. It involved a job of achieving national cohesion the magnitude of which the historians will do well not to ignore. The determination of the pace at which we were to move through this phase was a task of statesmanship that devolved in the end upon President Roosevelt. It was a task for which his peculiar mixture of the temper of decisiveness and the tactics of compromise fitted him admirably. His problem was to throw in American strength against Germany before it was too late, yet at the same time keep the Great Debate about intervention from ripping the nation apart. To many he seemed to be moving too swiftly, to others (including myself at the time) not decisively enough. He saw the need for action much earlier than others, yet he had so scorched himself in the Supreme Court fight that he moved along as if he were walking on eggshells. Opinions will continue to differ on his wisdom and leadership. Yet as we look back on it now, it was not so much he who determined the pace but the aggregate of conflicting mass-pulls acting through him, as (according to Tolstoy) it

must act through any leader of a people. To at least a partial degree, America was already in the war long before Pearl Harbor. Our neutrality was a physical one, and we were already taking steps to transform ourselves into the "arsenal of the democracies." Our munitions factories were working for the British, our technicians and fliers had actually enlisted with them.

The second large phase has been that of mobilization. This was begun in 1938; it is still by no means complete. The administrative task—that, for example, of converting an almost non-existent army into one whose full strength is likely to approach ten million—is itself a gigantic one. The task of organizing a war economy has, as might have been expected, presented the greatest strains and tensions. For, like the task of fighting the Depression from 1933 to 1938, it involved a simultaneous effort to organize an economy and to transform it. The internal resistances which the war economy met had less intensity than those of the economic crisis; but to counterbalance it, the pressure of time and the penalty for failure were far greater. The tasks of tooling up, of replacing the raw materials from which we were cut off, of expanding productive capacity, of curtailing and rationing civilian production, of conversion to war production, of meeting the farm price and wage thrusts toward inflation, of building an adequate tax structure were greater than any we had ever encountered. In addition there was the problem of staffing both the military and the economic commands with men who combined technical ability with social imagination. This required a sheer blasting of our complacency, an unfreezing of the system of power and status, a degree of social mobility, which accompany revolutionary movements but rarely accompany a struggle for the survival of the status quo.

The third phase is one upon which we have just entered—that of forming a combined strategy and a unified command

for a coalition war. Here the obstacles to be overcome were not only those of physical distance but also of social distance—the problems of national sensitivities, rivalries, power politics. It took a long time in American history before the habit of state loyalty was replaced by the habit of national perspective. A coalition war presents vast technical difficulties and imposes on them in addition the necessity for new habituations. It requires the pooling not only of resources and of man power but also of problems and dangers. It requires the determination of where the full force will be used against the enemy and where sacrifices will have to be made because of limited resources. It requires finally a generosity and a sense of confidence which, as in the case of Russia on the one hand and America and Britain on the other, tend to be undercut by past differences.

The fourth phase is one that we had, by 1943, scarcely glimpsed—that of political and ideological warfare. A nation like the British, trained to the habits of empire and hitherto secure behind the iron rivets of its power, had the realist's contempt for it. A nation like America, trained to the physical realities of production and acquainted with intangibles only in the form of pecuniary values, had always distrusted political activity and scorned ideas. Soviet Russia had developed in a far different tradition, but its place in the councils of the United Nations had not yet become integral enough to make its viewpoint persuasive. As a result, so crucial an issue in political- and idea-warfare as the war status of India was caught between the extremisms of past prides and memories, rather than regarded as a problem of arbitration to be directly assumed as one of the tasks of coalition war by the United Nations as a whole. And so crucial an issue as the treatment of the Darlan group in France, after our North African landing, was treated primarily as a problem in military expediency, rather than as an opportunity for idea-warfare.

It should be added that our immaturity in this form of

warfare was due not alone to our traditional contempt for it. It was no less due to the fears that the notion of idea-warfare aroused among the men who still dominated Anglo-American diplomatic policy and Anglo-American opinion. For when a war becomes centrally political and ideological, it becomes revolutionary. I have said above that Hitler's assault on the Western powers roused both conservative and revolutionary energies in resistance. In the early stages of the war it was natural that the conservative energies should have relatively free play, and the revolutionary energies be held in suspension. But when the war took a decisive turn for the better, and when we could glimpse at the end of the long, dark tunnel the sunshine outside, we faced the necessity of transforming the war into one of ideas, at the risk of losing the peace.

Because we had not thoroughly faced up to that problem yet, we were waging the war under a far-reaching illusion which might betray the whole meaning of the war. In our internal policies we followed a course that can only be described as social appeasement—courting the dollar-a-year men, keeping labor out of the crucial economic councils, bidding for the support of conservatives by placing them in the strategic positions of power. There was some soundness in this approach—if we were convinced that the fears and tenacities of the owning groups were so deeply part of their make-up that they would cling to them even at the risk of losing the war. And there was also some sense in it if we believed that ideas did not count in the war—that only industrial and armed strength and only power politics counted.

That we have huge resources on our side is undeniable. But that we can trust ourselves to them confidently is one of our basic illusions—the belief that we have a margin of resources and man-power so vast as to allow for whatever errors we make in economic organization or political warfare. This margin of waste may ultimately see us through the war despite our

errors: history has recorded instances of such survival. But it is not likely to see us through the post-war period unless we show the energy on our own part which can release the energies of democratic people all over the world. This is, in essence, what political warfare means. It is only initially a matter of ideology and policy. It is ultimately a matter of the release of energy and the organization of will. We are still prisoners of the illusion that the mentality which was responsible for the world's tragedy before September 1939—that of clinging to the status quo because of the fear of the avalanche that change might release—can somehow resolve the world's tragedy.

The readers of Plato's *Republic* will recall the section at the beginning of Book 7 in which the author paints in bold strokes the picture of men long inured to living as prisoners chained in a cave, who are accustomed to thinking of the shadows thrown on the wall of the cave as the realities, rather than the actual world outside. *De nobis fabula*. The story is about us, and about us today. We have been long crouching in the cramped quarters of our social and intellectual habits, and have become almost inured to the darkness of our cave. We continue to believe that wars can be won by dollars, material, power-politics—without the added force of ideas, values, fighting faiths. One need not be philosophically a Platonist to see that money, materials, men, may be only shadows on the screen of world history; and that the dazzling realities may lie in the new and revolutionary vision of a world in which freedom means equality of opportunity, and in which equality is a means toward the moral choices of individuals and toward the greatness of a whole people.

#### 4. ONLY A GREAT PEOPLE

For only a great people can rise to the demands which war makes today and which the post-war world will continue to make tomorrow on the frail stuff of the human will and the human capacity. Thus far the war has shown that we have the raw material out of which a great people is fashioned. But it has shown also that our social framework and our moral clarity have not been adequate to whip this material into the mighty force of a liberating, revolutionary nation. The fascist spokesmen have jibed at us as a decadent people. Whatever else may be true, that is not. We are not so much decadent as immature. We have not yet learned that in the history of the community, as in the biography of the individual, life exacts a price for what it gives; and that the price we must pay is the will to hack a path through the dense tangle of our institutions to reach our goal.

In war, as nowhere else, the style of a people is revealed, and the strength and weakness of its institutions. What the present war has shown about the American people is that in the final test they are made of heroic stuff; but that before the test comes they are slow to be stirred from their accustomed ways of life. The weaknesses in our social organization that the war has shown should not have surprised any student of American society. For a century and a half our thinking was fiercely individualist, untouched by community discipline, and it is difficult to change it to the mold of a war which must be fought as a collectivist war or not at all. We were preoccupied with pecuniary rather than with idea values or moral values, and it is difficult to make the transition. We thought in terms of the vendible rather than in terms of what will survive and what is worth survival. The dreams our young men

dreamt are not the sort which today furnishes the images of collective action. A polity of pressure groups does not easily transform itself into a cohesive nation.

And so we ran into difficulties. Our Congress was far from an assembly of Gods. Many of its members wore the social blinkers of isolationism and opposed the advances of what they considered a "labor government" more than the march of Hitler's tanks or Nazi ideas. The very tradition of truculence in defense of the people's freedom against the imaginary tyrannies of the Administration played into the hands of government by deadlock. Our press, a form of business enterprise without any of the checks which a watchful government placed upon other forms of enterprise, was narrow in its politics, earth-creeping in its social imagination. The Administration, still smarting under wounds administered in press, pulpit, lecture hall, broadcasting room during the decade of the New Deal effort, picked generally the path of negativism rather than that of affirmation. Our political parties continued without essential change as organizations for the spoils of office rather than as vanguards for the cohesion of the old society or the new. The forces of disunity, such as America First or the Christian Front, formally dissolved after Pearl Harbor, still retained their essential anti-democratic cast, their preference for the rule of a fascist élite, their basic contempt for the common man; and were awaiting only a favorable opportunity to reorganize and make a bid for power.

In the face of this it is difficult to see how words and hopes and wishes could do much in creating a better morale. It does not require much sophistication to see that morale is not something apart from the body politic itself. It is the mirror of the health of the state. It is the residual product of the whole history of the culture—of its achievements and frustrations, of its hopes and fears. Any people which carries within its heart, as our people did, the split between the impulse toward equal-



ity and the habit of acquisitiveness, the impulse toward justice and the habit of discrimination, the impulse toward democracy and the habit of private interest, will show a similar split when it confronts the greatest crisis of its existence.

I have set down harsh words about us. The time is past for anything but the strong medicine of the truth. This is not to be unheedful of the genuine strength our people showed. They entered the war despite an isolationist tradition and despite all the powers and principalities of reaction which tried to keep them out. They accepted conscription very early in the struggle, and with it they accepted the democratic principle in the military services at the very heart of a war social structure. Our young men went willing to fight on foreign soil, because that was the only way to preserve their country and their values. We adapted ourselves, although reluctantly, to the new techniques of warfare. We have been earnestly studying the novel horizons of the post-war world, and just as earnestly seeking to envisage our own place on these horizons.

## 5. WORLD IMAGE AND WORLD ORDER

The war has cut athwart many reckonings and, before it is over, it will have strewn the earth with the corpses of social and idea-systems as well as of men. It has already destroyed the spirit of whole nations; at the same time it has proved the strength of others and stirred the latent energies of new social constructions and new world forms. The time has not arrived to say what will come after it. Those who expect the war to be inevitably one of the periods of history that removes age-old obstructions against human advance are probably oversan-

guine. But their vision is sounder than the vision of those who see the war as one of cultural self-annihilation, and who believe Spenglerwise that, however it may end, it will usher in the dry season of the world, during which men's hopes and man's humanity will turn to dust. Unquestionably the war's end will bring once more the usual quota of disillusion and exhaustion, but it will also help clear the path for new potential social achievements—if we have it in us to follow that path. Whether we follow it is not inherent in the war but in us. Everything depends on how we conduct ourselves during the war crisis itself, and whether our span of energy and will can be made equal to the post-war demands upon it, or whether it will give way to a habit-fatigue.

One thing is clear even today: that the post-war period will not be something in which men and nations can make fresh starts, and in which the slate will be wiped clean. It has become a truism to say that the post-war period will be a continuation of the war period. But it is a truism worth underlining. If we have the strength to overcome the tragic dilemma of having to organize for mass killing while we have also to organize for mass living, then we shall have the strength to transcend the tragic dilemma of the post-war world—of having to release energies for a new world order at the same time that we drive rivets into the old world order to keep it from disintegration.

We shall have to reckon with the psychic effects of the large-scale habituation to violence. These may lay waste not only social institutions but the human spirit itself. The traumata left by what will probably be from five to ten years of warfare may produce a generation so scarred by violence that it seeks whatever security may be found in submission to some new and as yet unsuspected governing *élite*. But it is more likely that the residue left by violence will be an impatience with social contrivances which do not go to their ob-

jective of human living as straight as the bomb load speeds to its objective of death, and which do not sweep away traditional deterrents as inexorably as tanks go crashing through enemy obstacles. In this sense the violence experienced all over the world may be cleansing rather than numbing. It may mean the attrition of the tenacious sense of property, the crumbling of the old nationalisms, the clearing away of the taboos that have stood in the path of social change and world order. The important thing to remember is that we must reckon only with potentials, not with inevitabilities.

The period of peace-building will be a demanding one. First, because peace, no less than war, requires the balancing of vested interests, of pork and privilege, of pressure groups and national jealousies. If such obstructions cannot be cleared away under the urgency of war, it is unlikely that they will be cleared away when that urgency has been relaxed. Second, because the United Nations as a going concern will be essential to the building of the peace. If it cannot be forged during the war, when every imperative of victory requires it, will it be forged afterward when men think that they can return to normalcy? Third, because great social energies will have to be released in building the peace. If we cannot release them during the war, shall we be able to afterward, when every impulse will be toward easing the intolerable burden under which war puts the human mind?

The task before us will be that of peace-building, not of peacemaking in the usually accepted sense. If we continue to believe that peace means merely the formal cessation of hostilities and the contrivance of agreements about boundaries and reparations and colonies, we shall find ourselves after the war traversing the old cyclical path of war, depression, and breakdown, fascism and war again. But if we understand that peace is something that must be built slowly and carefully, we shall not make the mistake of crying peace when there is

as yet no peace. Actually, men know far more about the arts of warmaking than about the arts of peace-building. Despite the new complexities and refinements in war technology and the revolutionary changes in war strategy, these are variations upon the basic picture that goes back to the Assyrians and beyond. But we have still almost everything to learn about the technology of peace—a technology not of science but of politics; not of the machine, but of the human mind; not of communication lines but of our whole ethos. These arts we must set about learning now, before the creative impulse generated by the war has wholly died in us.

The most difficult of the problems we have to face may be conveniently grouped under three headings: those of transition, those of economic and political structure, and those of the necessary dynamic to make the peace function effectively.

That there will have to be some sort of transition period, during which a victorious group of United Nations will be the trustees for the strategies of peace-building, is pretty generally recognized. It may last five years or a decade or even a generation, and whatever formal peace conference is held will have to be only a phase of the transition. In fact, there is every argument against a separate peacemaking group. Just as the war did not begin with a declaration, so it will not end with a peace conference. One cannot bring together for a few weeks or a few months the handful of experienced technicians and leaders—all of them very fallible men—and expose them to the whole parallelogram of pressures and tensions which will bear down upon them, and expect them to come out with a workable scheme. The most reasonable method would be for the United Nations sitting as a war council to transform itself, with the necessary changes of personnel on the score of interest and capacity, into the United Nations sitting as a peace council. And such a council would have to continue sitting until it is clear that it can safely give way to the more perma-

nent international structures that it has slowly built up. To do otherwise will be to repeat the sorriest blunders all over.

For the technical aspects of the task of military occupation, we are already beginning to train men. Far more difficult will be the question of the spirit in which we shall set about doing this work, the political and psychological frame within which our technicians and administrators are to go about their jobs. This raises the crucial question of our attitude toward the conquered countries, and particularly Germany itself. In the controversy now going on in England between the conservative conception, as expressed by Vansittart, and the Labour Party conception, as expressed by Laski, Gollancz, and others, there can be little doubt that the Labour group is not only more humane, but has a firmer grasp of political realities.

This is no question of adopting a doltish softness toward our German enemies. It is a question of distinguishing between what is rotten and what is reclaimable in them. The Nazi ringleaders, including hundreds in the crucial posts in the Gestapo and the party, will have to be tried and punished as international political criminals—not only for starting the war, but even more for their deliberate slaughtering of civilian populations. If this is not accomplished adequately and in good time by legal processes, there will be a far grimmer and more spontaneous vengeance taken on Nazi leaders, high and low, by “the massed and angered forces of the common humanity” of Europe. Aside from the leaders, however, there will be millions of the young Nazi soldiers and party rank-and-file whose decency of feeling the fascist education will have destroyed almost beyond reconstruction. It may prove necessary somehow to de-politicize them for a period, by stripping them of the privileges of voting and holding office. The rest of the German people, however, must be regarded as still retaining under the proper leadership a democratic potential, and the German nation as capable of finding its way back from the

Nazi jungle into the clearing of civilization. To regard them otherwise would be to play into Hitler's hands, and by convincing the Germans that we mean to slash them and their nation into ribbons, convince them also that they have no retreat—no alternative but to back Hitler to the hilt.

*They must conquer or die  
Who have no retreat.*

Thus our realism must operate with an eye on the psychological drives of war; but our basic humanism must have behind it the iron will to establish a new order.

What is the image of such an order that we have in our minds? We mean of course to rebuild and replenish the ravaged cities and soil of Europe and Asia, including Germany and Japan. But to replenish the ravaged social energies of men, their belief in their fellows and in themselves, their capacity to act together for collective ends, will be far more difficult. The United Nations have today a large fund of prestige with the plain people of the world, including even those in Germany. It will be our privilege to increase that fund by food, medical supplies, clothing, seed for crops, machine tools—by the strategy of mercy and the strategy of comradeship. If those do not wholly succeed, we shall have to add the persuasion of international authority.

But toward what end? Will it but be toward perpetuating a Franco Spain and a Darlan France, of creating an Otto of Hapsburg Austria, a Tibor Eckhardt Hungary, a Rauschning Germany, an Italy cleansed of none of its fascist corruption except Mussolini himself, a "liberal industrialist" Japan? If during 1942 we studied the direction of American and British propaganda and—beyond the words themselves—the actual diplomatic behavior of the State Department and the Foreign Office, the conclusion was inescapable that our strategic diplo-

matic and propaganda officials intended to create the future by walking backward into the past. It was clear that the policies which were being pursued toward the countries which our armies had been sent to liberate were dictated not only by forceful considerations of military strategy but also by a tropismatic fear of a people's revolution in Europe. If this was our image of the kind of democracy we intended to bring in the wake of our conquering armies, and toward which our strategies of mercy and comradeship and compulsion were directed, the transition period could lead only into an ice age.

As I write, there is considerable talk, among liberals as well as conservatives, of the principle of legitimacy as the basis for a post-war order. Ferrero's last two books, just before his death in 1942, on the *Reconstruction of Europe* and the *Principles of Power*, seemed in the geography of the mind to bridge the frontier between the sense of the past and the hope for the future. But the trouble with an intellectual bridge is that a good deal depends upon the direction you choose for your travel. Ferrero defined a legitimate government as one which could rule without fear and terror. This is fair enough. But in this sense a government that seeks to fulfill the democratic revolution has more chance of being legitimate than one which seeks to repress it. The danger in the idea of legitimacy is its possible ambiguity. And this ambiguity plays into the hands of those who seek to fashion the future in the image of their own fears. For they can dress up their conservative tropism in the garments of traditionalism and reaction. They are themselves almost as much fear-ridden as the illegitimate rulers whom Ferrero describes as driven to war and terrorism in order to retain their power.

The reactionaries in our midst had fought a Gorgon-head war, recoiling from the prospect of a Europe in which Hitlerism might be too quickly crushed to the advantage of a powerful Russia. They were preparing for a Gorgon-head peace, re-

coiling from the image of a democratic world order which would have short shrift for the irresponsibility of economic privilege. They were tempted, in their fears, to turn to the defeated and embittered generals, the feudal landowners, the clerical conservatives, the fascist industrialists, as the mainstays of the post-war regimes. If they yielded, they were headed hell-bent for catastrophe. For the legitimate regimes to the building of which the transition period must be devoted will be free from fear only if they are democratic—only if they draw for their strength on the leaders of the workers, peasants, intellectuals, militant religious groups, small businessmen, and professional groups who form the functional elements within the culture.

If the United Nations adopt such a policy, the long-run structural tasks of establishing a world order become—I shall not say easy, but at least possible. We still speak of the tasks as those of reconstruction. Actually, of course, they are those of construction, for they involve the use of much that is still untried—the driving of new and flaming rivets into the world order, governed by a new heat of the brain. Years ago Rebecca West wrote, “We must lash down humanity with thongs of wisdom. We must give her an unsurprisable mind.” That is still true. But we shall have also to provide for mankind an unsurprisable body, capable of growth and freedom of movement, yet whose separate members function together with an organic strength. Our world image must become a world order.

This does not mean an uncritical adventure among global blueprints. Americans had in the midst of the war to deal with two forms of escapism. One was that of the cynical conservatives—the tough boys who asserted that there was no room for post-war planning while we were fighting, that nothing new was possible anyway, and that the future lay in a grimmer and more determined effort to control by force the hatreds and



power-lusts of the old Adam in us. The other was that of the radical utopians who spun out of their own innards the outlines of a new world Constitution—who believed that what men lacked thus far were good plans and good will—and who sought to remedy past anarchy by future organization and past unreason by exhortations to future rationality. The first group sought to escape from the necessity of fashioning during the war a world image which would serve as a fighting faith for men. The second sought to escape from the limitations on human action imposed by the continuities of history and the tenacity of the human animal.

Clearly the best path lay in boldness of conception and day-to-day realism in execution. It lay in starting from where we were, knowing where we wanted to get to, and drawing plans which did not break the organic continuity from the past to the future. Not that there was any wisdom in fetishizing the past. "Continuity with the past," Justice Holmes once remarked with asperity, "is not a duty: it is only a necessity." But as a matter of sheer necessity we shall probably have to work for some time with the constructions that are now available or just emerging: the nation-state, the regional economic unit, the United Nations as a loose working alliance.

The nation is likely to remain for the rest of our century the basic cultural unit, although with a dwindling political importance and an almost vanishing economic function. Those who hope or fear that it will become, like the American state, merely a political and administrative unit in a larger cultural whole are likely to be disappointed in both their hope and their fear. Whatever else will have been destroyed by the shooting and bloodletting of war, the whole tragic experience of the smaller European nations under the Nazi domination, and the need for keeping alive the flame of resistance in the stifling air of oppression, will, if anything, leave the love of country intensified. The sentiment that nourishes your spirit

during the whole period of a grim subjection is not one that you will easily discard when that subjection is over. The world would, moreover, be much the poorer without the national cultural traditions, each with its own pattern of creativeness and expression. For that reason it is essential that, whatever be the structure of international order, it allow for full autonomy to the national culture.

Such an autonomy will, however, be meaningless if it has to operate within a nightmare of armed aggression, economic collapse, imperialist domination. There can be no cultural freedom for any nation, small or large, unless there is political freedom. And there can be no political freedom unless there is some form of international control of the tensions and breakdowns which paralyze freedom. There is little chance that standing national armies will be abolished for several generations to come, or that disarmament can be effected. America itself is likely to maintain a huge armed force during the entire transition period, and the same may be said for Britain, Russia, China. The military men will make a bid after the war for civilian power as well, and they may for a time succeed. But if we can take steps during this period to build up a denationalized world police force, the need for the continued maintenance of huge standing armies will suffer some attrition, and the position of the small nations will become less desperate. Similarly, it is utopian to believe that we can wish out of existence the imperialist thrust that will be found within the economy and the national consciousness of every great power. But we can do a great deal—without the use of the treacherous system of mandates and protectorates—to create an international pool of the resources now found in what are known as the “backward peoples,” and to place the political development of these peoples in the trusteeship of the most democratic groups of their own racial and cultural tradition.

This still leaves the economic problem. Men have made great strides in the past quarter-century in the knowledge of economic techniques and the strategies for achieving full employment. Regulation and control of price and production policies, government spending, fiscal and investment controls, production planning—these are only a few of the major strategies with which nations of every political persuasion have experimented. What we have thus far lacked on the national plane has been not the knowledge of putting these into effect, but the will. And yet we have made considerable strides even on the latter score.

I have described elsewhere (see "If We Win the Future," in *Ideas for the Ice Age*) what the scope of regional economic federations might be. It is not inconceivable, for example, that a United Nations of Europe might emerge in time as a working economic unity, linked loosely on the one side with the vast Russian imperium and on the other with the British, yet maintaining its own identity. Only such a construction will have a chance to resolve the economic tasks that will bedevil post-war Europe—the problems of demobilizing the armies, of rebuilding the factories, of rebuilding and replanning the cities, of rehousing the people, of restoring the currency, of re-establishing trade, of effecting social security, of creating full employment. And what applies to a United Nations of Europe may apply also to a similar working unity in the Near East, in Asia, and in Latin America. All this is far more easily said than accomplished, but it is at least a workable goal to aim at.

There remains, from a structural standpoint, the problem of a world organization for political purposes. It will be more useful to think of such an organization as an end product rather than as a precondition. If the tasks of the transition period are approached with wisdom and with democratic realism, and if regional mechanisms are created for resolving prob-

lems of employment and economic security, a workable world organization is likely to follow as a consequence.

Such an organization would have to start from where we are now—from the United Nations as a war instrument. Gradually that can be extended until it reaches a global scope. The questions with which it alone will be able to deal are the questions of military security and political freedom which Mr. Roosevelt has summed up as “freedom from fear,” the questions of a denationalized world police and a denationalized resources pool, the control of the armament industries, and the relations between regional federations when such a going concern has emerged—only then will it be time to give it stability by writing its Constitution. The chances are strong that when that Constitution is written, it will not focus upon an international parliamentary assembly or a world court, as in the case of the League of Nations, and other more recent world plans. The creative techniques are likely to be two: the mixed administrative commission, consisting of technicians of every sort who know how to get things done on an international plane; and the combined command, consisting of political leaders who know, from their leadership of their people, what it is that needs to be done and for what social purposes and values. This prophecy is based not on any leanings toward a “managerial revolution,” but on the undoubted fact that the new axis of government, whether on a national or regional or international scale, rests on the fusion of the administrative processes with executive leadership.

The world image which I have sought to delineate is one that combines economic unity, political equality, democratic freedom, administrative effectiveness, cultural autonomy. It is a world image not unworthy of the efforts of men during the war and of their continued efforts in building a peace.

If it be asked, finally, what dynamic exists to translate this world image into a world order, the answer must lie in de-

mocracy itself. That democracy, I need scarcely add, cannot be expected to operate for the world as a whole if it fails as an effective dynamic in our own national internal affairs. It will have obstacles to overcome both within nations and between nations. There will be residues of national hatred. There will be continued class conflict. There will be the problem of breaking the power of economic privilege. There will be the inner expansive and imperialist tendencies within each of the great powers that emerges from the war. There will be, on the part of the ruling classes, fear of world socialism, and particularly of the prestige and power of Russia. There will be the animosities of color and race which have been, if anything, intensified by the war. All that we can say now is that whenever these problems have been resolved without bloody conflict, it has been through the operation of the democratic principle. What the young men of the world want is the expression of that principle. In Milo Perkins's phrase "they want to be wanted," and only the democratic principle can open the career to their talents and give them that stake in the future upon which the release of their energies depends.

The most tragic mistake that we can make and one that will defeat the democratic dynamic, will be to rely on the balance-of-power principle rather than that of the United Nations. If, as has been suggested, America and Britain plan to maintain a strong post-war Germany as a counter-poise to a strong Russia, or a strong Japan as a counter-poise to a strong China, the only result will be the continuance of world anarchy. What the balance-of-power principle adds up to is a gloomy prophecy that the frayed and blood-soaked policy of nation against nation will never be discontinued, and that world order can be only a fitful and temporary by-product of an equilibrium of hatreds and power-lusts. It is to the belying of that prophecy that the collective will of the democratic forces of the world must now dedicate itself.

IT IS LATER THAN YOU THINK

CHAPTER ONE

LAMENT FOR THE LIBERAL

1. *A Time of Troubles*
2. *Genealogy*
3. *Who Killed Adam Smith?*
4. *Fear and Freedom*
5. *Varieties of Liberal Experience*
6. *Liberalism without Tears*

## 1. A TIME OF TROUBLES

WHEN the history of our era comes to be written—if there are any survivors to write it—its tragedy may lie not in the men of destructive will whose souls were coils of wild serpents and who used the arena of history for their mortal embrace, but in the men of good will who willed the ends they sought and could not will the means to achieve them. The central tragedy of our age, in short, lies not alone in fascism; it lies even more in the liberalism which has thus far proved feckless to cope with social collapse and the fascism that follows it.

When I say "liberalism" I am using perhaps the most disputed term of our generation. But I use it advisedly, because it is central not only to our confusions but to our solutions as well. Liberalism as a concept has been buffeted by every storm that is today changing the landscape of the past. What is a liberal? we ask with a desperate amusement. Is President Roosevelt a liberal? Is Walter Lippmann a liberal? Is Governor La Follette a liberal? Is Justice Black a liberal? In one sense all these men share in varying degrees the strength and the defects of the liberal heritage. Yet there are vast differences that separate them.

Liberalism is at once an economic doctrine, a political philosophy, an intellectual attitude. The differences between liberals will be found chiefly in the first two; what ties them together is the third. It is ironic that we tend to think of liberalism chiefly as a broad attitude toward life, stripped of the



economic and political program that once gave that attitude its content. But the liberal attitude will be found in its most complete form in the liberals who, even if only tacitly, cling also to the classical liberal doctrines in economics and politics. I want to talk first of this classic liberalism—the liberalism of the men and women today who have the courage of the convictions of John Locke and Adam Smith and Richard Cobden and John Bright, and who hope with that courage to outbrave the collapse of their economic fabric and their political structure, and to meet the barbarism of the fascists.

The classical liberal has been greatly maligned, but mostly he has maligned himself. He has chosen to talk in terms of universal generalizations rather than of specific realities. He has brushed aside questions of economic program and concrete particulars for broad-grooved platitudes about the human spirit. He has preferred to be known primarily as the champion of an attitude of openness of mind. And the result has been that in a time of enormous social tension the public has accorded him the defects of his qualities. His open mind has been pictured as a drafty cave of the winds. It is a significant fact that, despite the shifting of party allegiances in America and the recent talk of a new political alignment, there has never been an important group that has wanted to call itself the Liberal Party. It would be an invitation to organized apathy.

For to the public the liberal has become the caricature of the way he has presented himself. He is Mr. Janus Facing-Both-Ways. He sees two sides to every question (why only two?). He is Hamlet-like in his indecisiveness at a time when victory comes to those who can make up their minds. He is generous in his judgment of others and tolerant of their way of life. His principle is one of inclusiveness—not in the democratic sense of including his fellow-men in his orbit because of his camaraderie with them, but in the martyr-like sense of allowing others to say and do as they please even when he hates and is hurt by

everything they stand for. He has an uneasy distrust of the capitalists, yet he feels that capitalism alone stands between him and anarchy. He is forever emphasizing the preciousness of the social heritage, the delicacy of the social fabric, and the danger of endangering either. His indignation at the denial of social justice mounts in direct proportion to its distance from himself. He will talk with unction about democracy, yet he fears the actions and passions of the democratic majorities. He is lofty in his attitude toward the masses and fluctuates among lip-service to their stereotypes (which he calls "public opinion"), uneasy fears when they begin to want something hard ("pressure groups"), and panic when they act to get it ("revolution"). His symbol is the swivel-chair, whether that of editor, columnist, or professor—and the best thing about it is that it can turn in so many directions. His ammunition is abstractions. His tenacity is nil. A purpose to him is like a work of art meticulously carved in butter.

Why has the liberal lent himself to this caricature? Once, in its formative days in the early modern centuries, liberalism had a progressive economic and political program. On that program it built a body of rationalization, a system of ideas. Today the program is no longer progressive, no longer tough-minded; history has passed it by. But while the program is gone, the ideology lingers on. And because, lingering on, it bears no conceivable relation to the felt needs of today or the impending collapse of tomorrow, the term "liberal" has inevitably taken on an air of unreality.

We are by no means unaware of this, and the point need not be labored. If there is anything clearly characteristic of the current bewilderment, it is our awareness of it. Books have been written on the contemporary confusion only to increase it, and on the modern temper only to exacerbate it. The type-character of our social literature—much like the fury-driven Orestes of Greek drama, or the parasite of Plautus or Terence,

or the Don Quixote of the end of feudalism, or the picaresque traveler of an expanding capitalism, or the Napoleonic romantic of Stendhal's France, or the Oblomov in the Russia of the Tsarist intelligentsia—is coming to be the ineffectual and divided liberal. That is not because the liberal either dominates our world or is particularly the victim of it, but because an anguished awareness is the essence of the liberal. We find in him a useful mirror of the doom toward which, along with him, we are all not so merrily rolling. Like our whole civilization, liberalism has come upon what Arnold Toynbee calls "a time of troubles." Its ancient virtues still decorate it and serve to make its suffering noble; but it has lost its ancient effectiveness. It has its passionate adherents in our own time, just as it had in its heyday in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But the note they sound now is martyr-like rather than militant, elegiac and not confident.

An age torn up by its roots is an age that will desperately and inevitably turn to extremisms. Our age has done so. All the more pitiful is the figure of the liberal, who alone calls for moderation. The struggle today, says Salvador de Madariaga, is the struggle between moderation and extremism—as if it were not true that moderation has always first had to become extreme in order to win. Only after a victory can you afford the generous gesture of being moderate—as the history of capitalist liberalism attests.

## 2 . G E N E A L O G Y

Liberalism was, at the beginning of the modern era, a response to the felt needs of the day. It was a living philosophy. Europe, during the centuries of feudal status and church hier-

archy, had been a closed and stuffy room. There was no breathing in it. There was no free movement. An economy that had for centuries been in process of contraction required the achievement of order through compulsion; and the ultimate sanctions were those imposed by a military aristocracy in a stratified society. The development of capitalism was revolutionary. It came to throw the windows open in this closed room, and to give mobility to a society of status. And liberalism was the intellectual garment of capitalism.

The history of the weaving of that intellectual garment is the history of the main forces of western thought for three centuries. The full body of the garment was an impressive one. Its philosophical center was the doctrine of individualism. Its intellectual method was rational: it moved to the conviction that man may, by taking thought and by rational inquiry in science, become master of the universe. Its political faith was the rule of law and the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. Its economic program was the Manchester ideal of free trade, free enterprise, and the competitive system. Its legal fabric was freedom of contract, the sanctity of property, and the doctrine of vested rights. It was shot through with an optimistic belief in progress, yet it thought to achieve that progress not through the common man but through an *élite* in the image of the liberal philosopher; the triumph it believed in was the triumph of the idea unaided by anything except its own inner force.

This liberalism was not a simple and satisfying catchword but a complex tissue of belief, ramifying into every area of life. What we must remember is that this body of belief was the instrument that capitalism used in coming into power. A doctrine does not spread by itself—because of its own inner beauty or logic or consistency. It spreads because it is a response to deeply experienced needs. It spreads because of strong impulses from the system of production and from the alignment of economic power. It spreads when there is some-

thing in it that is a response to the ethos of a period. It spreads when there are powerful groups willing to spread it because they are able to use it.

The new capitalist system of factory production and world trade, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was offering to replace the old system of a localist, feudal, agrarian economy. The new mercantile and capitalist class was making a bid for power to replace the agrarian aristocracy. Any class, in its bid for power, needs intellectual as well as economic weapons. And liberalism was at hand for the capitalists to use. Those who today take liberalism for granted should remember that it was once a weapon. The capitalist middle-class needed the ideas of freedom of trade, the competitive system, limited state power, the rule of law, the career open to talent. Capitalism as a system of class relations and liberalism as a system of thought grew up side by side. Liberalism, in short, was hammered out and used by the same forces that hammered out the reign of business enterprise.

Well, what happened? If only capitalism and liberalism could have stood still—if only they could have been frozen, arrested for eternity like the figures on Keats's Grecian urn, then all would have been well. But nothing stands still, least of all the ways in which we make our living and guide our lives. Liberalism had been spun out by teachers, professors, editors. It started as a set of proposals that they made in the interest of the middle class. But teachers, professors, and editors have an occupational disease: they take specific needs and expand them into universal generalizations. This was inevitable. The philosophers and economists and political theorists and Supreme Court judges who elaborated the theory of liberalism were not content merely with removing the obstructions to freedom of trade or to the competition of businessmen, or with giving their class and its adherents political suffrage. They had to say that freedom of trade or the competitive system or universal suf-

frage was valid absolutely and forever. Men's imaginations could not help being caught—even our own imaginations today are still caught—by the claims that liberalism staked out for the freedom of the human mind.

But, as often happens, the men who stood to profit from the triumph of liberalism identified these lofty claims with their own class interest. The growth of capitalism brought with it a new class—the workers with or without skill, with or without land, but essentially dependent on others for the sale of their labor and products. This class took the universals of liberalism and sought to apply them to their own situation. They took seriously the majority rule that was implicit in the doctrine of universal suffrage. They took economic freedom seriously, but emphasized the freedom of their jobs rather than freedom of trade. They took freedom of thought and civil liberties seriously, but the liberties they sought now were the liberties to organize economically and politically as workers. They took the concept of progress seriously, but the progress they thought of was man's collective control of his economic life. The result was the growth of Chartism, trade unionism, socialism.

The capitalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had cheered when their ideologists had extended their class claims into universals, and had agreed even when the liberties they sought were promised to other classes as well. It seemed a good bargain in the market-place of ideas, for the capitalists were engaged in a decisive struggle, and they needed to enlist the widest possible support from the other groups. But when in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the new chorus of voices invoked the promise of liberalism for the proletariat that industrialism had created, the capitalists called a halt. They converted liberalism from a credo for freeing the oppressed into a code for keeping them in their places. Liberalism was being claimed as a weapon by the wrong hands; it had therefore to be used, by the right hands, in the interests of a class defending

by force the position it had once won by force. But in the scuffle the appeal to universals had to be stifled.

### 3. WHO KILLED ADAM SMITH?

If Adam Smith, John Locke, David Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill were to walk the earth again, they would find the world of ideas that we live in fairly familiar, but the world of things would be alien and terrifying. For the ghosts that haunt us today are the ghosts of liberal doctrine, but the technological methods and the social conflicts are our own, creations of our own need, ingenuity, blundering. The liberal today, to the extent that he lives in a world of ideas, lives in a world once peopled and now abandoned.

Free trade, the theory of comparative advantage, *laissez-faire*, the distrust of governmental power—all these once had some meaning. They formed the economic and political base of the liberal position because they paralleled the actual position of the English mercantile and manufacturing classes in the world markets. It was England that was the first scene of the industrial revolution. It was England that first saw the fusion of scientific knowledge, technological development, natural resources, and organizational skill that was required for the fashioning of the almost human machines and the almost mechanized humans that have since become the type-figures of our world. The English merchants and factory owners needed ports open to their goods, balances that would give their customers the ability to pay for them, raw materials at the lowest prices. Hence, freedom of trade. And at home they wanted the widest possible latitude for the exploitation of natural resources and labor and for the amassing of profits. Hence *laissez-faire* and the distrust of governmental power.

The classical economists—Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, McCulloch, Senior—put the same genius into rationalizing the position of the English capitalist class as the scientists, inventors, tool-makers, merchant princes, and capitalists had put into establishing that position. As long as England was able to impose a sort of division of labor upon the world, whereby it furnished the factories and finished materials and the rest of the world furnished the raw materials and the markets, the theory of comparative advantage was sound enough and fitted the facts. And as long as the factories were small and an observable relation still existed between a man's effort and skill on the one hand, and the quality of his product and size of his profit on the other, *laissez-faire* and the competitive system were sound enough and fitted the facts.

But the industrial revolution, which brought the English mercantile and capitalist classes to power and made possible the triumph of liberal doctrine, also created the conditions which made that liberal doctrine no longer tenable. For one thing, other countries waited only until they could borrow the English industrial techniques, and then each of them—America, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Russia, even the small Danubian countries—strove to build an industrial Albion on its own soil. The growth of nationalism fostered a pride which had already set as its goal the mechanized glory and financial splendor of Great Britain; and the splintering of Europe into avid nationalities always at war or on the verge of war with each other seemed to make national self-sufficiency the condition of survival. The result has been to leave the liberals still clinging to the theory of comparative advantage, although the world in which they live is criss-crossed from one corner to another by tariff walls, and each country is hemmed in by exchange barriers. The liberal thinkers who continue to preach the theory of comparative advantage have, in strict logic, the truth on their side. But they are shouting it to a world too busy with



its own purposes to be distracted by the universals of classical economics. They can solace themselves only with that other liberal doctrine of the final triumph of the idea.

Much the same sort of thing may be said of the internal economics of liberalism. The captain of industry and the small-scale entrepreneur were replaced by giant enterprise. The face-to-face relation between employer and worker, producer and consumer, gave way before the impersonal impact of the corporation. The clamorous competition among individual producers as Adam Smith saw them, pitting their individual selfishness against one another to the common good, gave way to the concentrated power of the monopoly and the holding-company, setting prices and wages and production schedules by its own administrative action. In the face of these changes, the theory of *laissez-faire* lost what meaning it had once had. The spontaneous and self-regulating mechanism of the market, which had presumably made governmental action needless and vicious, no longer existed; in its place had come another government, a state within a state, to challenge the capacity of the people to control industry in the public welfare. One way or another, what John Stuart Mill called "the limits of the province of government" and the other Victorian theorists called "governmental interference" had to be extended. The rise of administrative boards and regulatory commissions, the coming of social insurance and the social service state, all testified to the fact that the world of the liberal theorists was a world of the past. Yet while the fact of the competitive system has vanished, the theory of competition remains. While the fact of the autonomous businessman is no longer conceivable, the theory of *laissez-faire* serves to keep alive the liberal *élan*.

The liberal apologists have recently been talking in terms of murder. "Who killed Adam Smith?" has become the theme of their inquiry. Lionel Robbins blames it on the enemy—on anti-liberal theorists of the German historical school such as

Gustav Schmoller, Friedrich List, even Bismarck, whose doctrines of high protection and state intervention spread with heretical wildfire amidst the competitive nationalisms. Walter Lippmann, however, considers it the work of insiders—of liberal theorists like Herbert Spencer and those who came after him, and liberal practitioners like the judges of the United States Supreme Court, all of whom betrayed liberalism by misunderstanding it, and by the excess of their enthusiasm for what they misunderstood. Actually, however, Adam Smith was not done to death, by either the calculated venom of his enemies or the mistaken zeal of his friends. He died a natural death in a changing world, through the unfolding forces of the industrial revolution that he celebrated and explained.

Thus the liberals, whose thinking once had an economic and political base, are now off-base. There is no actual economic system left for them to rationalize. There is only the structure of capitalist power, which they in many instances unknowingly strengthen by the act of worshiping their vanished gods at empty altars. And the vast popular movement that the liberals once led, they now fear.

#### 4 . F E A R   A N D   F R E E D O M

While liberalism has lost the substance of its triumph, it still retains the shadow. In the realm of ideas it still dominates us, although to a decreasing extent, and although the mocking gap between the idea and the effective world outside grows ever greater.

The liberal heritage has left its imprint most lastingly upon the body of our social sciences. Classical economics started as the greatest single intellectual force in forming the climate of nineteenth-century opinion. It has ended in concept-spinning,

lip-service to "scientific method," statistical quagmires, and apologetics for the power of business enterprise. Its insistence on applying the principle of marginal utility amidst the shards and fragments of capitalism, in a world of unemployment and destitution, has the grim humor of a new Taylorism—of asking a man to expend that last grain of energy to better his time-per-operation unit, when actually he has no job and is starving. The only thing the economists today can do with passion is to marshal their forces in an attack on socialist heresies. They are ready to prove, in the face of the fact of the Soviet Union, that there can be no such thing as a successful socialist economy—like the man who gazed long and thoughtfully at the pelican and turned away saying: "There is no such bird." As for the school of institutional economists, they represent not so much a body of economic thought as a transitional point of view. They have revolted against the never-never economics of the classical school in its cruder formulations, but they have been caught in their own complexities. They are rootless. They know too much to believe in the ancient simplicities of *laissez-faire* and marginal utility. They do not yet know enough to take a vigorous stand on how to run an economic system by socialization and planning.

But institutional economics is decisive compared with the rootlessness of social theory in an era of fading liberalism. Our sociologists are ridden by two obsessions—the social heritage and the social process. The result of the first obsession is that they shrink from any idea that might disturb the social fabric; of the second, that they stuff the living material of life into a set of cubby-holes, labeled neatly by the type of social process that it represents, from "acculturation" to "urbanization." In their eagerness to see everything as continuous process, they leave out the changes in pace, and the revolutionary dislocations that give history its tempo, and the qualitative differences that give social experience its meaning. The influence of

the liberal theory of history has been similarly deadening. It has attacked all formulations that have sought to assign a decisive role in history to the material conditions of life. While itself emphasizing the spiritual, it has leaned toward a colorless and safe "multiple factors" view of historic causation. The art of history has become a vacation resort for gentlemanly amateurs, who delineate psychological motives, gloss over group struggles, and end on some such nostalgic and semihortatory note as the "American dream." Like the historians, the anthropologists have also felt the liberal influence. At first it gave them a tendency to make well-bred nineteenth-century Englishmen out of the savages, and to illustrate the doctrine of progress by the stages of social development. That has been discarded, although we still find in primitive tribes a bolstering for our own property institutions. More recently anthropology has tended toward a liberal atomism, which studies each tribe by and for itself, and hesitates to draw any conclusions from it that will be valid for any other tribe or for our own time. In education we lean toward "progressive" methods, which has in practice meant paying more and more attention to fewer and fewer children. In literary and art criticism we are still dominated by the liberal's horror of what he calls "propaganda," and his fear of the barbaric energy of the people.

But it is in politics and law that the liberal spirit most nakedly asserts itself. Liberalism in politics has increasingly meant a rider fearfully and prayerfully astride an unbroken horse—the educated and propertied minority astride the vast democratic majority. "Now we must educate our masters," a wit remarked after the passage of the Second Reform Act in England. That is typically liberal—the acceptance, at least in rhetoric, of the mastery of the people, and the condescension toward their capacity. Political theory, under the liberal influence, has tended toward the anti-massism of Ortega y Gas-

set; it has been fearful of majority rule and has stressed minority rights, even though in the practice of our constitutional law the theory of minority rights has led to the actuality of minority rule. It has been goo-goo political theory, although the job of political housecleaning has still left the house itself standing in the midst of shambles. Its energies have been given over to fighting dangers that might conceivably arise from positive action to meet the present dangers of unemployment and collapse. Its particular concern has been the political tyranny that would flow from an effort at central economic planning.

What the liberals have been trying to do is to achieve freedom through fear. That is the vast paradox of their position. What were once positive attempts to lift governmental restrictions on trade and commerce in the interests of an expanding capitalism have in a contracting economy been dwarfed to the compass of a set of fears of all governmental powers. And those fears have left liberalism negative and frustrated.

I want to dwell on this a moment. Liberal doctrine has taught us that man must carry on his life in a malignant political universe. Power corrupts; government is evil. There is a beneficent Providence that makes our individual economic selfishnesses add up to a common good, but there is no such divine hand to arrange it so that our individual political selfishnesses should similarly add up to the common good. The province of government in human affairs, we are told, must be kept as narrow as possible because government is at best a necessary evil. If you read our liberal columnists, commentators, editorial writers, today you will feel yourself an Emperor Jones caught in the jungle of tribal fears and historic taboos. Don't do this, you're frightening the public utilities. Don't do that, you're stifling free enterprise. Don't reorganize the government bureaus, it will lead to dictatorship. Don't reform the Supreme Court, it will lead to anarchy. Don't pass the wages-hours bill or the child-labor law, it will lead to centralized

tyranny. Don't give the unemployed WPA jobs, it will corrupt elections. Don't push trade unionism, it will alienate the middle classes. Don't strike, it will bring fascism. Don't plan, it will bring communism. Don't give power to the majority, it will enslave the minority. Don't, don't, don't.

These are curious fears, curious negativisms—this fear of governmental power and of class alignments, this hope that if we hide our heads from our problems the problems will cease to exist, this desire to creep into a shell and cross our fingers and let the winds and storms of the world blow over us until they die away. They are especially curious in America because its entire history has been affirmative and not negative—because it is not through fear that Americans opened a continent and built a nation. Yet the attitude of the old liberalism has today become negativist, fear-obsessed, its eyes fixed on the past.

The roots of this fear may be found in the liberal heritage itself. The early liberals thought that government action was malignant and individual action beneficent. They thought that only a heroic moral restraint could keep a government official an honest man. The political emotions were blocked out dramatically as passions—ambition, greed, the lust for power, the self-sacrificing love of country. Liberalism had its origins in such a climate of opinion; it had its origins, moreover, in the specific attempts of the middle class to get free of government restraints; it had its origins finally in the morally inhibited context of the Protestant Reformation. Thus we have as the liberal heritage a Plutarchian political morality filtered through the astringency of Calvinist doctrine. One might conclude from the liberal attitude that it was conceived in sin and born in fear.

The fallacy of fear-drenched liberalism, from the viewpoint of the pursuit of freedom, is that it has been more concerned with *freedom from* than with *freedom for*. We live in liberal capitalist democracies, and the liberal part of us watches in

fearful withdrawal the struggle between the capitalist part and the democratic part. Liberalism is negativist in a world that penalizes the negative and where only the assertive is likely to survive. Our technology has always insisted on achieving something. We have never needed an affirmative liberal attitude more than today because we have never needed freedom more—freedom for a huge collective economic effort, freedom for the contrivance of new political forms to carry the burden of that effort, freedom to take the leisure that technology has brought us and build it into our culture. But our liberalism today is fearful at once of the vistas that such a freedom opens up and of the methods that must be used to achieve it. It fears the rigors of collective economic planning; it fears the responsibilities of decisive governmental control; it shrinks from the challenge of educating and informing a mass public opinion. It looks back at the vanished glory of its Golden Age and forward to nothing except the *rigor mortis* of the existing order.

The result is that the classical liberals play directly into the hands of the reactionaries. They have become the most reliable allies that reaction has. Their doctrine of individualism and *laissez-faire* leads, in the absence of effective government control, to the further concentration of economic power in the hands of the giant corporations. Their doctrine of the rule of law leads to the oligarchical power of the Supreme Court. Their doctrine of liberty of contract leads, in the hands of the Supreme Court, to the defeat of basic humanitarian legislation. Their doctrine of states' rights leads to the creation of a No-Man's Land in which the federal government is prevented from acting and the states refuse to act. Their belief in social control through litigation leads to the attempt to regulate a social system through the interminable delays of the courts. Their lip-service to the shibboleths of freedom ties the hands of the government and leaves the field to the tyranny of corporations. It is not that the liberals want to stand still but that they fear

to go forward. There has not been a single important issue fought out in the New Deal administration in which the sympathetic fears of the passive liberals have not been more dangerous to the progressive forces than the outright hostility of the Liberty League or the utility lobbies. Consciously or not, the liberals have become the Fifth Column in the besieged city of the progressive cause.

## 5 . V A R I E T I E S O F L I B E R A L E X P E R I E N C E

I have been speaking thus far in this chapter only of the passive liberal, or the classical liberal. It is time to define the varieties of the liberal experience. The classical liberal I have already considered at some length—the man who believes, like his brother of Adam Smith's time—in Nature's Simple Plan for governing the world, and who wants most to rebuild our society on a stream-lined model of the eighteenth century. His principal concern, in an era of the advancing majority, is with the judicial process and the protection of minority rights. This liberal may be found in any political party or outside all of them. He may call himself Liberal, Labourite, or Conservative; Republican, Democrat, or Progressive; Radical Socialist or even Socialist. He varies only in the degree of articulateness with which he comes out as the apologist for the existing class alignment, and in the degree of consciousness with which he uses in defense of the modern Bourbons all the old catchwords which, as Walton Hamilton puts it, had once served to beat a Stuart despot.

There is a second kind of liberal—the small-enterprise liberal. He has abandoned all notions of an automatic economic system, or even the notion of one regulated through the litigation



of the common law courts. He recognizes the monstrous fact of the concentration of economic power. But, in his plans for vanquishing that power, he rejects the premise of the new collectivism that large-scale enterprise is inevitable and that the problem now is for the state to control or operate it. He wants competition enforced, and is willing to act affirmatively in economic terms to get it enforced. He wants enterprise broken up into smaller units, and enough government power to do the breaking-up and to see administratively that the units behave. He is realistic enough to see that you cannot conjure back the old order by removing the restrictions on the new. But he believes that with sweat and effort you can create a replica of the old order in the new. He is no passive liberal. At his best he is a militant, like Justice Brandeis.

The third type is the New Dealer, or the administrative liberal. He differs from the small-enterprise liberal not alone in his tendencies toward socialization of the huge economic aggregates. He differs from him even more in the astringent mood with which he confronts the claims of the financial community to decisive power in industry or government, his sensitiveness toward attempts to sabotage government control, his sense of urgency about the need for making government power equal to its tasks. His emphasis is throughout upon the administrative process and executive power. He, too, is a capitalist, although a reluctant one. Labor wage gains and trade-union growth are not, for him, ends in themselves but means for stabilizing and tempering capitalism. He wants to make capitalism work in order to avert revolution. But he is not content to scrap the claims of social justice in the process.

There is a fourth and new type of liberal emerging—the democratic collectivist. His leanings are leftward, toward a broadened base of government and culture. His aim is to reassert for the contemporary world the aims of the liberal movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but

to do it on the base of the newly emerging class of today that corresponds to the emerging capitalist class of that day. His economic program is one of democratic socialization. He is, like the New Dealers, a gradualist, but he is likely to regard their methods as temporizing and blundering, and to think that only a concerted effort at economic planning that has the massed power of the people behind it is likely to succeed. He regards unionism not only as a method for better circulating purchasing power but as a new cultural base for democracy. He is more likely to call himself a democrat or a collectivist than a liberal, but his continuity with the liberal tradition is an unbroken one.

These varieties of liberals are seen from the viewpoint of their approach to the economic system and the province of government. Of the varieties of the liberal temper it is more difficult to speak. The classical free-market liberal is also a passive liberal in his temper. He is filled with indignation at the harsh and ruthless world, but he is likely to take it out mainly in rhetoric, whether with the *sæva indignatio* of Oswald Garrison Villard or the Olympian calm of Walter Lippmann. He talks a good deal about ethics, as was illustrated in the fight over the Supreme Court reorganization plan. He is especially concerned that the right objectives should not be attained by the wrong methods. He is scrupulous on the subject of means and ends, either because he would rather not win than win in other than the traditional liberal way, or because, like Aldous Huxley, he believes that social reform cannot be institutional but must start with the individual as a moral creature and then work out to the social periphery. But the passive liberal has no monopoly on ethics. Every liberal, whatever his brand, brings to bear a moral emphasis. The small-enterprise liberal of the Brandeis type stresses the individual's social responsibility in a sphere manageable enough so that he can have direct control over it. The New Deal

liberal is concerned with social justice for the underlying population. The left-wing democratic liberal is equally concerned with social justice and with the broadened ethics of a popular cultural base.

In short, the clash among the varieties of liberalism is a clash not so much of ethical norms as of the picture of the society that each envisages, and of the political and economic methods it considers necessary to achieve that society.

## 6. LIBERALISM WITHOUT TEARS

What is there that is essential to all liberal doctrine? The central place of civil liberties in any cultural system, the principle of inclusive tolerance of all creeds and all political beliefs, the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of human life, the cultural diversity that comes from individual heresies, the competition of ideas in the market-place of thought and action, the career open to talent, the belief in the possibilities of human expansion and the richness of human life, the unending fight against all the principalities and powers of reaction—these elements of the liberal doctrine are universals. It was the great achievement of the liberal movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to have asserted these goals in the career of the human spirit. It is a tribute we must pay to the liberals of today to say that they have continued to keep these goals in sight under disheartening conditions, and to fight for them heroically with weapons however archaic.

But to think that the old goals can be captured by reasserting the old liberalism is to be blind to the dynamic of history. The goals are permanently valid. But in pursuit of them liberal-

ism must change its economic base, its political tactic, its whole mood. Its economic base must shift from *laissez-faire*, or even the dream of a restored economy of small units, to collectivism and economic planning as imperatives. Its political tactic must shift from indecisiveness to militancy. Its class base must shift from capitalist irresponsibility to majority power. Its philosophic emphasis must shift from the rights of an *élite* to the creativeness of the majority. Its whole mood must become positive rather than negative. It must replace fear by affirmation.

Which is to say that instead of the liberalism that presents continually the visage of martyrdom, we need a liberalism without tears, as confident and aggressive in its economic goals and its political tactic as was the classical liberalism in its own day.

But, the reader may object, you have changed the lineaments of liberalism until it is a travesty to call it any longer by the same name. I answer: it is only the garments and weapons that are changed, because the old ones are worn out. Liberalism is a soldier who has won many battles in the continuing war of the human spirit, but who must now shift to a new front. He has been traveling along dusty roads and through difficult terrain to reach it. Now that he is there he needs a new uniform, new ammunition, new fighting orders. The problems of political theory and economic organization that lie ahead of us are problems as vast and as uncharted as those that faced Hume, Locke, Adam Smith, Rousseau, Diderot, Thomas Jefferson, in an earlier crisis of the human spirit. We cannot confront those problems with anything short of the boldness of the early liberals and their willingness to laugh in the face of vested ideas and interests. If liberalism is to survive it must show a willingness to face the premises and the consequences of democratic collectivism—that is, of economic planning and majority rule. The humanist ideals that tradi-

tional liberalism has set up are necessary in any decent social system. But the traditional liberal program is not adequate for attaining those ideals. Here, as always, one must distinguish between the necessary and the adequate. Liberalism is important, but liberalism is not enough. The tasks of the future will be the tasks of a democratic collectivism.

This is a condition, not only for the continued life of the liberal ideal, but for cultural survival itself. The fascist theorists—Nietzsche, Spengler, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alfred Rosenberg—each of whom has provided a panel for the temple of death that Hitler and Mussolini are building in Europe, have been hurling gibes at us for half a century. Their taunt is that democracy lacks spine and fiber, that it must perish because of a failure of nerve. Mankind, they say, stands in need of a rebarbarization of its instincts, which must be furnished not by calling forth new creative energies in the democratic mass, but through the new *élite* of the big, "blond beast." There are those of us who believe that fascism is a throwback not to the barbaric strength of the Germanic tribes but to the decadence of feudalism; and that it is not fascism but democracy that has the youthful energies. Yet we must admit that the supineness of a passive liberalism, in the national and international spheres equally, gives some substance to the fascist taunt. Our task is to show that a militant collectivist democracy differs from passive liberalism, and that it means not a weakening but a renewal of the energies that once made liberalism a fighting world movement.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER ONE

The shift in the liberal position since 1938 is worth noting. With the outbreak of the Second World War the clinging to an uncontrolled economy grew more utopian than ever, and

its futility became apparent even to most of the passive liberals. The old liberal attitude had therefore increasingly to turn from the internal economy to foreign affairs. For a time it flourished in the form of a pacifist isolationism. By entering a war against fascism, the passive liberals like O. G. Villard and Socialist pacifists like Norman Thomas told us, we would become fascist ourselves. By fighting for democracy we would destroy our own democracy.

These slogans were bombed out of significance at Pearl Harbor. After that the attitude of passive liberalism focused on two things—the concern with the preservation of civil liberties during wartime, and the concern with the post-war period. Both are important if they are integrated with effective warmaking. Yet to concentrate on them and on them alone at a time when democratic survival and a global democratic revolution are in jeopardy is a symptom of the retreat from reality which has been the disease of our age.

But the liberals I have spoken of were the marginal ones. More characteristic was the striking personal change since 1938 in two influential columnists—Walter Lippmann and Dorothy Thompson. In both cases there was a movement away from fear of governmental control of the economic system; in both cases the impact of world events produced a new international realism; and in both cases there was an understanding of the need for decisiveness of planning, timing, leadership, action. The defection of these two from the cause of passive liberalism struck it a serious blow. Even more noteworthy was the formation, among some conservatives as diverse as Henry Luce, Herbert Agar, and Wendell Willkie, of a new and more streamlined conservative philosophy, basically international in outlook, deeply humanist, yet vague about the outlines of their economic program. This new Tory Left is likely more and more to supplant the old liberalism.

## CHAPTER TWO

# CIVILIZATION IS A DEATH DANCE

1. *Not in Our Stars*
2. *The House of Fascist Thought*
3. *The Pattern of Fascist Action*
4. *End of the Capitalist Dream*
5. *War and Peace*
6. *Wasteland*

## 1. NOT IN OUR STARS

CULTURES have perished before of decadence. They lost the cunning of hand or brain, they fell prey to some sharp climatic change, they were wiped out through conquest by tribes unheard of before, they were caught in some taboo that left them powerless to deal with Nature and get a living from it. But these are not likely to happen to us. If anything (to repeat what is familiar enough) we are experiencing an increase in the tempo of living—a quickened pace of scientific advance both in discoveries and in inventions, a greater mastery of technology, a more complete control of communications, a more effective conquest of disease and knowledge of its prevention resulting in a greater span of life, a quickened movement of social and political change, a more staccato rhythm in our living and thinking. It is as if some god with a cinema machine were unrolling us against the screen of history in double- and triple-quick time. Whatever else may be dubious in the generalizations about us, there does seem to be some law of acceleration at work in the unfolding of our culture.

Along with the increase in tempo—to explore the familiar again—we are witnessing an increase in magnitude. We are doing everything not only faster but bigger than ever before. Europeans used to laugh at Americans for talking in terms of magnitudes. But they have discovered that America was not merely provincial: it was the spearpoint of the time-spirit.



Soviet Russia emulates America in the magnitude of its industrial production and sets itself a succession of stepped-up tasks. Fascist Germany plans a civic center in Berlin that will be bigger and better than anything ever undertaken and will allow millions to behold and listen to whoever is *Führer* at the time. Fascist Italy shows its megalomania in its dreams of a restored Roman empire and in the struttings and boastings of its *Duce*. Even England, still in most respects a democracy, is rearming at a pace almost "American" in its fervor for magnitudes, and the men at the head of its armaments production, like Sir Kingsley Wood, are more Babbitt-like figures than any that Sinclair Lewis ever dreamt of. But our increasing sense of magnitudes goes deeper than this diffusion of Babbitttry. It reaches to two facts: we have learned the need and the means for greater social reform and for the heightened possibilities of life; and we have at the same time learned the means, if not the need, for greater social destructiveness.

It is here that we get somewhere near the meaning of the modern dilemma. Everything has been growing faster and bigger, but most of all the chasm between what we can build and what we can destroy. The greatest paradox of history is to be found within our social system itself. In economics I have in mind not so much the paradox of poverty and plenty—of the enormous resources we have and the actual poverty. I have in mind the techniques, lying at hand for us to use, of planning for a stable and abundant economy, and the techniques we seem determined to follow of distributing ever less wealth with ever greater friction. In the cultural realm we have new powers for enriching human life, and new powers also for destroying whole cities and civilian populations and the bonds that tie men to men not as nationals but as human beings.

It is this that gives many the sense that civilization is a

death dance. The twin plagues of depression and war, never more dreaded, were never more deadly in their imminence and destructiveness. We have grown accustomed to the breaking up of our old mental habits. We have witnessed in Spain and China two major undeclared wars, and nations engaged in mortal combat yet talking of themselves as non-interveners. We have seen established cultures, like the German, collapse before the fascist impact. We have seen tested economic notions upset, and nations run through a monetary "wizardry" as synthetic as the products they must contrive because of their autarchy. We have seen a prosperous economy like the American get to the point where unemployment seems to be the rule rather than the exception. We have seen a strange and hybrid way of life emerging—that of the WPA worker, who is neither employed nor yet unemployed, and whose whole mental outlook is shaped by that fact. We have seen the British Empire, which had been accustomed to set its own conditions for what it conceived to be a *Pax Britannica* for the world, cringe and crawl before the open threat of fascist force as if it were the merest tyro in international affairs. We have seen a historic nation like Austria conquered over the week-end, and a plucky new democracy like Czechoslovakia betrayed by those who should have been its friends. We have seen men of established careers and fortunes stripped of their possessions and doomed to the isolation of a ghetto in which they have no place; and internationally famous doctors, writers, scientists, wrenched out of a culture they prized, and compelled to pick up the shattered fragments of their lives on an alien soil.

In fact, we have seen so many of our cherished conceptions undercut and negated that we are beginning to ask whether a similar fate may not befall our master-conception, civilization. It is little wonder that among the more copious productions

of our age, one must set down the spinning of jeremiads. Wherever thought is still relatively free—that is to say, outside of the more blatantly dictatorial regimes—it celebrates its freedom by prophesying its own doom, and bleakly envisages a world turned back to the barbarians. This is true not only of our professional publicists and Cassandras. It is true especially of our young people, who are always the test of the mood of a culture. The young man growing to maturity today faces a world in which he must fight with a growing number of claimants for a dwindling number of jobs. If he is sensitive and intelligent he knows that a period of struggle awaits him and that the chances are not slight of his having to face death on the battlefield or meet the living death of the concentration camp.

Our perception of life is always far more abrupt than the objective reality. History presents continuities, but thinking about history always runs in terms of Golden Ages and cataclysms, of Eden and the fall. Our tendency to make a cataclysm out of the coming of fascism is all the sharper since we have the Great War to set as the cleavage-line between civilization and chaos. But actually history is an unbroken web. The Great War represented the explosion of dynamite that had been stored up in the European powder-house for decades in the form of imperialist rivalries. Nor is the new age of fascist tyrants a sudden visitation on the world. It is not a brand-new weapon that the capitalists have discovered for maintaining their power. The weapon has been in use for some time.

No, it is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are fodder for fascism. We may as well understand that fascism represents one line of logic in our liberal-capitalist culture. It is not the inevitable line of logic. But it is a line clear enough and plausible enough so that a people may take it up without the creative effort of having to make it up.

## 2 . THE HOUSE OF FASCIST THOUGHT

Lenin once wrote with pride that Marxism represented the confluence of German philosophy, French utopian socialism, and English classical economics; after the Russian Revolution he might have added to this trinity the Russian Bolshevik genius for the union of theory with effective action. But the fascist ideology can claim to represent a somewhat similar fusion of German romantic philosophy and state worship, French emphasis on intuition, German and French racism, the Italian doctrine of the *élite*, the cult of the irrational flowing from the discoveries of Austrian psychoanalysts, and the manipulation of the irrational borrowed from American advertising techniques.

Thus the house of fascist thought is a sort of death-house of all nations. It is idle to talk of the sources of fascism in some particular national character, just as it would be idle to talk similarly of the sources of socialism. Fascism is implicit in Nietzsche's cult of the superman, his merciless flaying of democracy and liberalism, his obsession with the decadence of the humanitarian and Christian ideals. It is implicit in Max Müller's flirtations with "Aryanism" not only as a linguistic category but as a distinct racial form, and in the fervor with which men like Gobineau, H. S. Chamberlain, and Richard Wagner glorified a racial uniqueness that does not exist. It is implicit in the doctrine of the *élite* outlined by Gaetano Mosca and pushed further by Vilfredo Pareto, and in Pareto's social zoology of the ruthless "lions" who know how to use force and the cunning "foxes" who seek to govern by stratagems and concessions. It is implicit in the attempt of German philosophers to equate the power of the Prussian state with the structure of the universe. It is implicit in the mystical

Geist-mongering of the Savigny tradition in historical jurisprudence, as it is in the mystical glorification of the irresponsible leader in the romantic philosophers and in Englishmen like Thomas Carlyle who borrowed from them. It is implicit in Georges Sorel's doctrine of the social myth which, regardless of its truth or falsehood, may be used to stir people to action; as it is also in his doctrine of the cleansing sanctity of violence. It is implicit in the cold architecture of Stefan George's poetry, which built a Greek temple for the Nazi spirit. It is implicit in the earlier intuitionism of Bergson, the "racial memory" of Jung, the tortured irrationalism of D. H. Lawrence. It is implicit in Ortega y Gasset's anti-massism, in the gentlemanly anti-democratic utterances of W. E. H. Lecky and Sir Henry Sumner Maine, in Dostoievsky's masochistic rejection of human reason, in Oswald Spengler's elaborate charlatanism about cultural degeneration and the need for ridding a social system of its proletarian scum. It is implicit finally in the inflated nationalisms that became, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the stock-in-trade of every rising European thinker.

The strands that have gone into the making of the fascist ideology are strands in the western intellectual tradition—now given a pattern and social reality by the will-to-power of individual men and the blind tenacity of a class amidst the chaotic drift of capitalist forces. What we forget is that the seeds of fascism were present from the very beginning in capitalist culture, and that the harvest has been mainly a matter of time and favorable soil and climate. I do not like the game of historical hindsight which consists of going back to tag as "fascist precursors" the thinkers one does not like or as fascist "in tendency" the historical forces one does not like. Yet we gain nothing by putting on blinkers against the continuities in western history. Think back to William Blake's "dark Satanic mills," to the tyranny that the early factory

owners in every country exercised over their workers, to the force the state used to keep wages low and unrest at a minimum.

In England, in France, in America, these fascist implications of capitalist culture were for a long time obscured by the accompaniments of capitalist growth. For the industrialists, on their path to power, had to fight the reactionary feudal groups (in the case of America, the British government itself), and had to avail themselves of liberal and democratic doctrines as weapons; and they had also, in bringing industrialism to fruition, to enlist the aid of an advancing science, with its implied rationalism. So it is scarcely surprising that fascism has been slower in maturing in these countries than in some others.

Social theory has been puzzled by the problem of why revolutionary changes come where they do and, although the soil may seem just as fertile, not elsewhere. For a long time the Marxians thought that proletarian revolution would come first in the most highly industrialized countries. The revolution that came off in Russia and those that failed to come off anywhere else showed this to be a surface analysis. What the theorists had not reckoned with was the by-products of long-established industrialisms: a tenacious capitalist class and a deeply ingrained democratic tradition.

Much the same, from a different perspective, holds true for fascism. In England, France, America, industrialism developed relatively early, with accompanying liberal and democratic growths. In Germany, Austria, Italy, Japan, Turkey, the Latin-American countries, it came relatively late, and represented a borrowing of technologies from the older industrialisms. Thorstein Veblen has pointed out that borrowing has its merits: that a country borrowing a technology is saved not only the trouble of inventing it, but also the need of taking over the cumbersome institutional growths that clustered

around it in its country of origin. The trouble is that in getting rid of these inefficient growths, one gets rid also of the protective sheaths against the violent impact of the technology and of the power of the newly enriched classes. Add to this the newness of the nationalist movements in the same countries. Neither in Germany nor Italy nor Japan did nationalism have a chance to wear off its rough edges or to develop the tolerances of earlier nationalisms. Because of the lateness and crudeness of both the industrialist and the nationalist movements, the margin between feudal tyranny and capitalist tyranny was reduced, and one was practically superimposed on the other. And wherever these two exploitative patterns met, in a time of crisis, the parliamentary institutions were too new and untried to resist them.

But while the older capitalisms have thus far kept themselves from fascism, they have furnished its characteristic techniques and nourished its mentality. A capitalist society, by its inner logic, regards the individual worker merely as a commodity in the labor market or as an item on the demand schedule of a product. It splits the Bill of Rights in two, making a cleavage between political and economic liberties so broad that finally both slip through. While it is deploring class antagonisms, it encourages nationalist feeling until, in the form of red-baiting legionnaires, vigilantes, storm troopers, it becomes a weapon against every class but that of the owners. The lack of any genuine democracy in the running of industry permeates capitalist society with a basic contempt for parliamentary institutions—a contempt that is fortified by fear of majority rule and by the belief that civilization is a trusteeship of the few. The distrust that the common people thus get for their own capacity to cope with the problems of their society prepares them to call for a *Führer*, and the standardization of their lives prepares them to bow to his orders.

Those that are not thus prepared may finally be cajoled into

subjection. For capitalist society takes a manipulative attitude toward the masses. It regards them as material to be governed, material to fight its wars and buy its products. Capitalism has developed to the full the techniques of advertising and high-pressure salesmanship in order to get unwanted products into the hands of buyers. Is it any wonder that those techniques have been taken over by the fascists? Is it any wonder that Hitler should have done us the honor of borrowing our most highly prized manipulative techniques in order to turn them to purposes we never dreamt of? In terms of the swaying of mass emotions Nazism may be summarized as the application of American capitalist techniques to German middle-class docility.

What I am saying, in effect, is that the house of fascist thought has been built with bricks supplied by capitalist society everywhere. There are those who, in rejecting this interpretation, lay their greatest emphasis on the Great War and make fascism essentially a post-war product. I quarrel with them only in their perspective—because they lay so much stress on an event rather than on a system of social relations, because they isolate the war itself from the sources that gave rise to it. The Great War had an immediate relation to fascism. It used up productive resources at a fearful rate. It left the world's capitalisms a prey to boom and inflation and depression. It left in its wake hysterias, humiliations, national hatreds, that could easily be turned to class and racial purposes. It gave the military a strangle-hold on the cultural. By broadening the province of government it led to a struggle for the control of the government. It cheapened human life and deadened the sense of human brotherhood. Above all, through the exploration of the irrationalisms of men and the uses of propaganda, it allowed a few men to play God with human destiny over the radio and in the huge meeting-hall.

But in all these respects the war was what it was and did



what it did because it was the completed expression of the logic of capitalist society. And it is with that logic that fascism is linked.

### 3. THE PATTERN OF FASCIST ACTION

If we know very little about the *why* of fascism, we know a good deal about its *how*. At the end of fifteen years of fascist power we still have only a set of surmises about its roots and origins; but we have been given an acid-etched picture of how it operates—what clears the way for it, how it gains and consolidates power, what its impact is on the human spirit.

It is a mistake, despite what I have said above about the integral relation of capitalism and fascism, to regard fascism as merely the inevitable outcome of capitalist development, a weapon that the capitalists wield and control in order to maintain their power. And it is surely a mistake to fall into the liberal habit of regarding fascism wholly as a perverse lapse from the divine grace of civil liberties, a momentary departure from the norm of the liberal capitalist state. Fascism is in essence a desperate revolt against the wider implications of the democratic principle. It uses the rhetoric of anti-bolshevism to attract and then enslave the capitalists, the rhetoric of socialism to attract and then enslave the masses, the rhetoric of nationalism to gloss over its own disunities and its cultural barbarism.

Fascism is impossible in any country unless the road has been prepared for it through three developments—economic collapse, political paralysis, psychological hysteria. They are the pre-conditions for the building of fascist power. If you look at Germany you will see how these conditions operated. It

was economic collapse that gave Hitler's movement a fertile soil in which to grow. How or why that economic collapse came—whether through the inherent decay of German capitalism, or the Carthaginian terms of the peace settlement, or the mismanagement of the post-war German governments—does not concern us here. What is essential is that the collapse of the economic structure—creating unemployment and monetary chaos, cutting the ground from under the habitual patterns of everyday life, filling even those who had jobs with a sense of insecurity—posed huge tasks which might have been too great even for a strong government. The German post-war governments were not strong. Along with economic collapse came political paralysis. Again one need not inquire into its sources. Whatever its source, it was the paralysis of the party system, and the failure of the whole parliamentary machinery to function, that made it possible for a minority group to capture power. And it was the psychological hysteria flowing from this whole process of collapse and paralysis, and deliberately spread by the minority group among the masses that were ready for it, that finally led to the overthrow of German capitalist democracy.

When we ask what groups are basic in this overthrow, we are on different ground. The earlier theorists were inclined to regard fascism as a middle-class movement. The Marxists have thought of it as the last stage of capitalist decay and as the Hindenburg line of the capitalist owning class against the threat of socialism. And there has been a tendency among liberal conservatives in America, such as Walter Lippmann and Dorothy Thompson, to regard it as the tyranny of the mass-majority, brought on by the encroachments of the "providential state."

I prefer a more complex class analysis than any of these. The big German corporations, the banking interests, and the large landowning Junkers found themselves in a situation where

they could no longer exercise unquestioned power: the republican, socialist, communist, and trade-union elements were too great an obstacle. They were willing, therefore, to avail themselves of the help of a band of chauvinist adventurers whom they had previously despised—adventurers who were half mystical fanatics, caught up in the religion of nationalism, and half racketeers. These adventurers, with the money of the Big Business groups and the connivance of the police, the courts, and the army, were able to build a powerful movement. The sinews of war were furnished by Big Business. The enrollment for the Nazi storm troops came principally from the lower middle class, the vast petty bureaucracy, the *Lumpenproletariat*. The leadership was a matter of a deep sense of personal mission on Hitler's part, aided by a build-up not unlike an American advertising campaign or the ministrations of a corps of publicity men for a Hollywood star. The ideology was the construction of a small group of intellectuals, adept at propaganda technique and aware not only of the *Führer*-symbolism but also of the need for a scapegoat-and-enemy symbol, which the Jews were made to fill.

Thus fascism, which starts as the personal project of a small group of gangsters and adventurers, extends its scope gradually until it includes a substantial minority, drawing heavily upon every class of the population, and to an extent even upon the workers. It brutalizes half a nation in order to destroy the other half. But the dynamic throughout is furnished by the owning groups. Without them the chauvinist and anti-semitic catchwords would be recognized for the hollow lies that they are, the gangsters would be clapped into prison as petty offenders, the intellectuals would be laughed down as amateurs by their fellows, the ambitions of the dictators would be only a particularly unpleasant form of schizophrenia, and the brownshirts and blackshirts would be merely so many yards of innocent cloth.

What then, we ask, makes the capitalists act as the dynamic for destroying not only the world of their opponents but in the end their own world as well? The simplest, but at the same time the truest answer, is class blindness: not the cruelty or even the stupidity of individual men, many of whom are kindly fathers, genial friends, humane if paternalistic employers; but the group habituations and political hysterias of men who hold the economic power in a nation through their control of the productive and distributive machinery, who feel that their income and prestige depend on the continuance of that power, and who therefore cling to it with a tenacity that overrides every other consideration, including even their rational self-interest.

"If two men ride upon a horse," Thomas Hobbes remarked, "one must ride in front." The outlook of the capitalists is Hobbesian. The horse is the supreme power in a liberal capitalist democracy. In theory, democracy is the political framework within which liberal thought and capitalist enterprise can function. In practice, capitalism has been willing to tolerate only so much liberal thought and democratic action as is compatible with the continuance of capitalist power. Wherever in any country the majorities have shown an intention of taking the democratic dogma seriously, have gained control of the governmental machinery, organized trade unions, and through a New Deal of one sort or another have broadened the province of government in the control of capitalism, the capitalists have been tempted to direct action. They have been tempted to rid their world of unpleasant labor organizers, irritating liberal thinkers, presumptuous progressive leaders. And in several countries they have finally succumbed to the temptation to destroy democratic government and snuff out liberal thought in order to ensure the permanence of their class domination.

Given these essentials—the backing of the industrialists, an

ideology, a leadership, a strong party organization, the enthusiasm of the middle class, the connivance of the police and the army in the terrorism of the squadristi—the actual fascist thrust at power is a relatively formal affair. Where the preparatory work was done thoroughly, as in Germany and Italy, and where the liberal and labor opposition had been split, it required no great courage or strength for the fascists to storm the gates of power. What follows is generally more important—the consolidation of power. There is a swift, intensified, incredibly brutal reign of terror. All potential opposition groups are stamped out, all means of communication are conscripted by the state, and everyone is made to understand that his choice lies between submission and the concentration camp or worse. In a new kind of economic mobilization, the trade unions are crushed and a national “Labor Front” created; the professions are purged of “undesirables”; every excuse is used to take over the business firms tainted by “Jewish” ownership or control; the monetary, credit, and foreign-exchange mechanism is placed under the complete direction of the state, and its manipulations shrouded in secrecy. “The party” becomes the steel frame of society; the left-wing elements in the fascist party army are purged; the national army is co-ordinated with the purposes of the party; the churches are forced into line or dissolved; and the entire nation is plunged into the uniformity of a totalitarian darkness.

There is a growing tendency even among men of humane bent to surrender the democratic effort in the face of the proved “efficiency” of the fascist state. I have read recently, for example, a plea for dictatorship written by A. J. Cronin, an English novelist of some influence if not distinction, and based on a hankering for the single-minded ruthlessness of the militarized state. It is true that the fascist pattern of action cuts all the corners. The dictators know what they want, at least in immediate terms, and they know how to get it. What they

want is new areas of exploitation, and the power and perquisites that come from it; how they get these is through new techniques of manipulation.

Real social planning does not take place in the fascist state, except in the military sphere. Elsewhere, especially in the economic sphere, the state has extended enormously the area and effectiveness of intervention without assuming that co-ordination of consumption, production, and income distribution which is the basis of a planned economy, and without challenging the essentials of an exploitative capitalism. In fact, fascism may be defined as capitalism that has discovered new exploitative techniques where the old ones have worn out. The expulsion of Jews from the professions and from the marketing mechanism has eased the atmosphere in the most stifling portion of the capitalist structure, and the one where the absence of the inherent restraints of monopolistic growth and capital requirements have brought the densest crowding; where the Jews have been expelled, the "Aryans" can enter and find at least a temporary breathing-spell. The confiscation of property for political motives and the manipulation of the currency have added to the state's capacity to maintain an enormous bureaucratic establishment, which would otherwise have to disgorge its members on a saturated labor market. The sentencing of women to imprisonment in their homes has taken that much strain off the labor market, even at the cost of a reduction in living standards. Labor camps and low wages, made possible by the destruction of the trade unions, make possible in turn the maintenance of profits in the face of heavy government levies and minute regulation of business. The vast expansion of the armament industry furnishes at least temporarily that prime necessity for fending off capitalist collapse—a booming industry into which idle capital and employment can flow. In general it may be said of fascism that it not only explores every new possible area of exploitation,

but it also is able, through its organization of force, to take up the slack still left to capitalism. That, on the economic side, is its vaunted efficiency.

On the political side its efficiency is partly summed up by the phrase Shaw uses in *Heartbreak House*: it is easy to govern with a stick. Partly, but not wholly. For fascism governs also through subtler means than the stick. It governs through the reiterated stereotypes which are read in the press, and heard over the radio, and taught in Labor Front and army and school. Above all, it governs through the easing of the intolerable burden of decision that the individual bears in the democratic state. Instead of having to decide, one has only to obey, boast, hate—the easiest habits and patterns in men's entire emotional range. And to make obedience simpler, fascism does away with some of the more usual cleavages in political life—between war and peace, civilians and military, the claims of church and state, the teachings of science and the needs of politics. Fascism introduces new unities into the body politic. The concept of the total war is one such unity—peace being deemed only an interlude between wars and a preparation for the next, and culture being measured in terms of its effectiveness in welding the people into a fighting unit. There is also a new unity between internal and foreign policy. The old hypocrisy of capitalist imperialism, which taught sweetness and light at home but played Simon Legree abroad, has been wiped out: Simon Legree now dominates at home as well as abroad. And the concept of the enemy, which the Nazi theorist Carl Schmitt has called the basic concept of political science, has been made the crux of internal as well as of foreign politics. Thus the sadism which we indulge in only as a luxury during wars, lynchings, and vigilante outbreaks has been made the daily bread of fascist populations.

These are elements of fascist strength not to be passed over. In the long run, I am convinced, fascism is an unstable and

transitional political form. But its tenacity must not be underestimated. To be sure, fascism is in itself hollow. Once you lift the visor, as Archibald MacLeish has pointed out, there is nothing inside the coat of armor. There is only the force of accumulated aggression, the sadism, the tinsel glories, the gaudy symbols, the negation of culture and of the human spirit itself.

Fascism is a lie. But even a lie, when organized and given emotional force as a myth, can have currency for a long time, and can be at once destructive and attractive. And that is what has happened to the fascist lie.

#### 4. END OF THE CAPITALIST DREAM

Let us do away with the mythology of Atlas supporting the world. Nietzsche's symbolism, in Zarathustra, of life as a tight-rope walker crossing a yawning chasm is far more expressive of the actuality. The fascist states today are even more unstable than the capitalist democracies; and while the only socialist state in the world, the Soviet Union, has elements of inner stability that other nations have not achieved, it has also basic problems of internal structure and political freedom which cut very deep. Actually, every state today is a transition state, clinging to a temporary equilibrium, and caught in contradictions so fundamental as to make political freedom a function of the margin of tolerance that still remains, and intellectual freedom a rapidly dwindling luxury.

Socialism, in the only country in which it has established itself, had to use revolutionary means to achieve power because Tsarist capitalism was in possession of the state machinery and of the strategic political positions. Once the



revolution was attained, the socialist state sought to entrench its power through the same means it had used to achieve that power—ruthless force in pursuit of the popular welfare. The monolithic party which had been so effective in seizing power became the single-party monolithic state to crush all opposition and meet the threats of foreign militarism and espionage. In terms of socialist survival this was probably necessary. In terms of the long-run building of a world socialist state, it has been unwise because it has split socialist parties in other countries, and because the suppression of opposition leads soon to the withering of those variants of thought and outlook on which the ultimate health of a state depends. Socialism cannot remain totalitarian and still achieve a socialism of the spirit. When it becomes totalitarian, it lets itself in for the instability of the praetorian state, with its succession of military garrisons and adventurist leaders. "Power always corrupts," Lord Acton once wrote, "and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But this is to view politics as a moral problem rather than as a creative process. The real indictment of a totalitarian socialist regime is not that it may become corrupt, but it may become sterile—as sterile as the fascist regimes have already proved themselves. Even on the streets of socialism, there is the danger of blind alleys.

That fascism is a blind alley of history there can be no doubt. It has not the economic stability of the socialist regime; its political stability is specious and depends upon a pace of national expansion and foreign conquest that cannot be maintained; nor has it the resources for renewing its strength which the democratic cultures have. It rests, as I have pointed out, on desperate techniques of exploiting the workers and of manipulating opinion. In economic terms those techniques have their limits in the capacity of the state to keep living standards low in order to direct the major share of the national income into profits for the capitalists, racketeering graft for

party functionaries, and fodder for the war machine. It has its limits also in the state's capacity to keep the stock of gold large enough to purchase from abroad the things made necessary by inadequate natural resources, or else to capture territory having the needed resources without involving the nation in war. In political terms, the techniques of manipulation have their limits in the limits of concord among quarreling chiefs, and in the limits of tolerance of an underlying population which may at any time find that the bread is bad and that they have seen the circuses before.

But capitalist democracy has its blind alleys as well. Its great weakness is capitalism as an organization of economic and social relations. Capitalism has passed through the stages of guild control, mercantilist state control, individualist *laissez-faire*, corporate monopoly. Always its apologists have sought to eternalize it, to talk of it as if it were a permanent part of the structure of the universe, built into the fabric of human nature. Actually, of course, it represents only a phase of human history—a few centuries out of all the centuries of civilized life.

In its heyday, capitalism made out of economic striving a competitive jungle in which every person struggled with every other person as animals struggle in the jungle, and society became a clique to applaud the survivor. Even in its heyday capitalism was subject to panic, depression, strikes, violence, the extremes of wealth and poverty. But it was able to weather them because it had inner reserves of strength, and because it had opened up and exploited natural resources so vast that it was able to pile up lavish fortunes and waste wealth on a magnificent scale and still leave enough for the people to keep them from revolt. There were periodic crises, but the system seemed always to recover. In America, the state gave free land to settlers, huge grants to railroads, protective tariffs to industry, and made substantial expenditures for internal improvements. Each war that America fought was a stimulus to

capitalism through the collective funds that were poured into production for destruction: the Civil War, for example, gave the impetus to American industrialization, the World War made America the world's financial ruler. Each time that capitalism has sagged or threatened to collapse, something new has come to revive it, whether land grant, war, or a new industry whose "boom" has infected the rest of the industrial structure.

But for the past decade nothing has been able to bring a genuine revival. The Great Depression seems to mark not only the sharpest depression in our history but also a new phase of "permanent depression"—a new and lower base-line from which future recessions and recoveries are to be measured. The capitalist dream has ended in the capitalist agony. Nature's Simple Plan has petered out in the bread-line, the flop-house, the relief station.

There is, therefore, a need such as there has never been before for a method of social change to achieve real economic stability. Economic collapse, social inequality, cultural *malaise*, and above all the ever-present danger of fascist violence demand that such a path toward stability be found. The difficulty is that capitalism can no longer be saved by the incantation of "business as usual," or by withdrawing government control, or by the mumbo-jumbo of business "confidence," or by the magic of trust-busting, or by the expedients of autarchy, or by the desperate logic of adding successive increments of the very capitalist "freedom" that has created the difficulties. The ironic fact is that capitalism cannot be saved, in more than an immediate sense, even through fascism; for what keeps the fascist economic system running is its socialist elements of collective action, and what keeps it weak is its capitalist elements of diverting the national income into profits and armaments, and not pumping it back into purchasing-power. Paradoxical as it may seem, what can alone "save" capitalism is a

drastic measure of democratic socialization; and the stable form toward which socialization ultimately tends is socialism.

But the attempts to stabilize capitalism in the direction of democratic socialization, imperative as they may be from the viewpoint of the collective welfare, seem anything but imperative to the capitalists. They feel that they are being asked Christian-wise to lose themselves that they may find themselves; and they do not choose Christian-wise to turn the other cheek. They prefer to meet the request by investment sabotage, violence and lawlessness in labor relations, political corruption, class bitterness, red-baiting, press totalitarianism, and the kindling of fascist fires. This bitterness of the capitalists is reflected also in the middle class, which shares their prejudices and is putty to their stereotypes. The growth of trade-union organization evokes not only capitalist opposition but middle-class fear and hysteria. And every extension of governmental power over industry creates a greater determination on the part of the reactionaries to get control of the state machinery and keep it permanently in their hands and away from the radicals and the wild men.

What are the alternatives? If corporate capitalism is unwilling to yield to the needs of a socialized democracy and if it succeeds in mobilizing the reactionary forces against it, then corporate capitalism may grow militant and turn into the corporate state. If, on the other hand, the democratic forces can grow sufficiently militant and cohesive, they may achieve a democratic planned economy, even though it be within a capitalist framework. The corporate fascist state is, however, in all likelihood an unstable form that will eventually be dissolved for a form closer to socialism; while democratic planning within a capitalist framework may be an equally unstable form, in which the socialized area is extended and the capitalist area shrinks, with socialism as the result. The world is seeking stable economic and political forms. The fact is, however, that when

they are achieved they will not be pure forms of socialism, fascism, or democratic capitalism. They are likely to be hybrids. The real struggle today is thus not only to keep the world from sinking into fascist barbarism during the calculable future. It is also the struggle to have a decisive hand in fashioning the composition of the hybrid which will form the social base of the next major era of history.

## 5 . WAR AND PEACE

There are three routines in the death dance of civilization today. One is fascism, the second is capitalist depression, the third is war. I have discussed the first two. Now I want to talk about war.

Drastic changes have come over the face of war. Man's mechanical genius has never been so completely dedicated to the tasks of construction as it is now to the tasks of destruction. Air warfare, tank warfare, chemical warfare, electrical warfare, disease warfare—there is nothing in the entire range of technology and science that has not been conscripted to the uses of man's inhumanity to man. The entire population has been drawn into the vortex, through warfare which seeks to crush the morale of civilians by raining down terror from the air.

Yet the real push, in war as in any other art or science, is toward autonomy. The new techniques seek to free war of its dependence on mass man-power, on morale, on natural resources. Their aim is to give the race to the swift and the ruthless. Their dream is the twenty-four-hour war—all over before the enemy can recover from the paralysis of its nerve-centers. War follows closely, in its technology, its art forms, its social organization, the inner structure of society. In the feudal centuries it was hierarchical and aristocratic, with the knights

bearing the brunt of the battle, and single conflict the decisive factor. In the great battles of the sixteenth century the artisan, the yeoman, the man of science, began to play their parts. In Napoleonic times warfare was democratic, with a citizens' army as the revolutionizing force. The World War was a stalemate of mass armies and interlocked technologies. Today the trend is again toward a warfare of the *élite*—the aristocracy of gas bomb and air projectile. At any rate, that is the aim and the hope of the fascist powers, who have installed an *élite* in power at home, and hope with it to conquer the world against superior numbers and weight.

That is why I cannot agree with those who see in recent events a repetition of the eve of the World War, and who say wearily, like people watching a movie re-enacted: "This is where we came in." It is true that we are on the eve of a war. But it is a different kind of war and a different kind of eve. War has at once broadened—in its ruthlessness toward civilians, and narrowed—in its movement toward autonomy. It has become an interior struggle, operating through the fomenting of civil conflict, and at the same time it has become transnational, reaching across national boundaries in pursuit of class interests and ideologies. It no longer waits for some "incident" to precipitate it. For an incident is too much of an accident, and the powers are laying their plans deliberately, waging thus far undeclared war only, afraid of open and general warfare that might prove catastrophic, waiting for the favorable moment and alignment.

What is new in the warfare of today is not the new weapons or the new technologies, as is commonly assumed. It is the new conceptions—the conceptions not only of war but of politics. What is new is fascism, which excels not in the techniques of warfare but in its absorption with those techniques, and in the primacy which it accords to war in the scheme of life. I have already spoken of the fascist concept of the total

war, which sees war as the rule of men's lives and peace as the exception, and which measures economics and culture only in terms of their military effectiveness. The Nazis think of themselves as following the pattern of Bismarck and Treitschke and, farther back, of the Spartans. That may be so. But they follow also the logic of the old capitalist imperialism in a transmuted form. There is an inner need in fascism for outer expansion. It is not the earlier imperialist need for markets or for new investment. It is the need for natural resources in order to feed the war machine and establish an autarchic independence of the rest of the world. It is the need for new populations as mercenaries in armies that will act as a check on the restlessness of the old. It is the need for resounding triumphs which will keep alive the people's sense of superiority, and those triumphs are the more resounding when the subjugated country is not a "backward" territory but an old and civilized culture. It is, finally, the need for extinguishing the last spark of the democratic flame abroad lest it rekindle the fires at home. An aggressive imperialist policy is the logical extension of an aggressive praetorian state.

But what about a peace policy? Over against the militarisms that we used to know, we were accustomed to place pacifism. But in the face of recent fascist behavior, pacifism would seem to be somewhat less than adequate as a political policy, whatever may be its merits as a philosophy or a way of life when given the persuasive accents of an Aldous Huxley or some other of the lesser breed of mystics. In terms of consequence and not of intent, pacifism has played into the purposes of the fascists, who celebrate such an attitude among the populations marked for subjugation even while they despise it.

More recently we have tended to phrase the conflict over policy among ourselves as one between "isolation" and "collective security." But I prefer a somewhat different posing of the problem, which will strip it of the connotations of Ameri-

can or Soviet emphasis that cling to these terms. The real struggle over policy today is one between a policy of appeasing the fascist nations and using them as a bulwark against the radicalism of the Left, and the policy of throwing a *cordon sanitaire* around the fascist tendencies and thus giving the democracies a chance to work out their own salvations.

Neither of these policies can guarantee the "peace" that Neville Chamberlain promises or the "security" that his opponents promise. Both groups in their proselytizing fervor have run into intellectual and moral insolvency because they have promised more than they can possibly fulfil. There can be no guarantees of either peace or security, for the simple reason that the guarantors cannot control those who are not a party to the contract yet are the crux of the situation—the fascist powers. The policy of appeasement rests on the premise that the fascists will keep promises they make in being bought off from breaking other promises previously made; that there is a definite limit at which they will be willing to stop their aggressive imperialism, a limit within the capacity of the appeasing nations to grant; that there is a saturation point for fascist ambitions short of world hegemony. But none of these premises is true, and all of them are at the mercy of fascist irresponsibility. The difficulties of the *cordon sanitaire* are similar, although to my own mind not equal. The policy of collective action to keep the fascist power within the limits it has already achieved rests on the premise that fascist aggression consists of equal parts of bullying and bluff, which is probably true; but it rests also on the premise that the fascist economy is a static one and can be content with the present equilibrium, which is not true. Fascism must expand or perish. The appeasers are willing to let it expand, hoping it will stop short of world conquest; the resisters are willing to fight it, hoping it will stop short of war. Neither hope is completely justified, although the latter has the balance of probabilities on its side.



But in either event, war seems scarcely avoidable. The policy of the *cordon sanitaire* has at least the merit of facing the main chance, and—if war is unavoidable—of fighting it out before it is too late.

I do not mean to take lightly the prospect of having to fight it out with the fascist powers. It is a grim prospect and, at best, the lesser of two evils—if the alternative be presumed to be fascist domination of the world. If war comes within the next two years it will throw out of focus much of the analysis of the internal democratic tactic that I present in the pages that follow. For the democracies will have to concentrate their energies upon war, and will be able to resume the task of reform only after a successful war and even then only under great difficulty.

Meanwhile, the world finds itself caught in a vicious circle. It is chasing its tail from bankruptcy to war. All Europe and Asia, and to an extent even America, is caught in a system of armament economics. The entire economy everywhere is being increasingly geared to armament production. This was true before the World War as well. But the danger at that time was that the general staffs hankered to use the pretty toys that had been built for them; and that the tensions created by the armament race could not be held in check when an "incident" happened to set them off. Today the danger lies not in the armament race but in armament economics. In Germany, in England, and in France, it is armament production and the military establishment that take up the slack of unemployment and keep profits high and purchasing-power circulating. Remove the pressure for armaments and you remove the underpinning of the economy and precipitate bankruptcy. If it is certain that nothing short of war will remedy the condition, it is equally certain that war will not, for war with its huge wastes will make the task of democratic reconstruction a truly heroic one. From the fascist viewpoint, however, the danger of the

armament economy is that it will lead to communist revolution everywhere. For despite their glorification of it, the fascists fear war more than they do anything except freedom of thought. It puts guns into the hands of the civilian population, where they are dangerous; and when it is over it leaves the population impoverished, disillusioned, sapped of discipline—that is to say, ripe for revolution.

Thus the fascists fear war because it may bring communism, and the democratic nations fear it because it will bring fascism. And yet all prepare for it, and the fascists profess themselves as willing to precipitate it if their demands are not granted. And the preparations lead inevitably to it, while the policy of appeasement postpones it at a catastrophic cost, and the policy of the *cordon sanitaire*, which alone has the probabilities of peace or victory on its side, is not adopted because of fear and short-sightedness. And in the framework of fascist diplomatic triumphs, the democratic effort in a country like America has to work against mounting difficulties and is increasingly frustrated.

## 6 . W A S T E L A N D

There was a time—it seems many ages ago but we have learned to measure our secular trends in terms of decades or even years—when a man could say: “Upon this rock I will build my church.” But there are few of the old churches left standing today, and not merely because of artillery bombardment. The old liberalism is gone, the old socialism and communism are gone. Even the old conservatism is gone: men can no longer be conservative—they find themselves pushed by events into being reactionaries. The distance that separates us from the pre-fascist era is even greater than the distance that

separates us from the pre-war era. The old landmarks are gone, that we once used in finding our intellectual way around. What is left is the bare and trackless face of bewilderment.

Of the foundations of our culture, what can the young man or woman of today turn to without hopelessness or fear? We made a good deal once of the sanctity of the individual, but we have seen individualism turn into the anarchy of *laissez-faire* or run amuck into the glorification of the dictator. The dreams our young men have for generations dreamt were dreams of capitalist expansion; but it is a truism that the frontiers of such expansion are gone. Capitalism, which was once a principle of growth, has become only a principle for the retention of past growth. There is no group today more frightened than the capitalists. Their fright has made them turn to terror and tyranny, and what was once the dream of the young has become the nightmare of all. As for science and technology, they have lost the magic they once possessed for us. Who now speaks of the laboratory as an idol? For one thing, we have lost the secret—if we ever had it—of how to sell what science and the factory produce. For another, we have seen how barbaric may be the consequences of mechanization when turned to the uses of death rather than life. For an earlier generation in America, Thorstein Veblen was a prophet because he turned for salvation from the capitalist to the engineer; and technocracy, although dead as a movement, has left its mark on the thinking of every group. But the weakness of those who still talk of technology as salvation is that they fail to tell us to what use the technological skills will be put. They omit the *cui bono*. They would substitute measurement for value but they have not grappled with the problem of values.

If we turn from the productive and acquisitive arts to the governmental, we find the same wasteland. Liberalism, where it has not wholly failed, is being abandoned. As an economic program it has become a never-never land toward which

there can be no retreat; as an intellectual attitude it operates mainly to rationalize the tenacity with which the capitalists still cling to their old power under democratic forms. The classical liberal is no longer at the growing-point of thought. He has taken on the querulous accent of the martyr. But the plague of doubt has visited not only the liberals. Radicals have been inclined in the past to scoff at liberalism and to turn instead to the craggy "realism" of proletarian dictatorship. But even the Marxians today feel shell-shocked by the swift growth of fascism. There remains finally, as a world outlook, democracy. But for all my belief in the inner strength of democracy, I must confess that democracy is much slobbered over today but rarely understood. There are false clamorings and some genuine fears about what majorities may do, and there is a realization of how they have been used and misused in the march of adventurers to power.

We have abandoned the ancient virtues because of our fear of strange and false gods. The Russian Revolution and the fascist successes have cut clear across our consciousness with a shock of impact never before experienced since the Protestant Reformation and the religious wars. That shock has dislocated us from our accustomed positions without giving most of us any new base of operations. But revolutions are end-products. The process of which they form part has been a long-drawn-out process of capitalist collapse, brought to the bursting-point by the World War. The result has been the removal of the psychological barriers not only to revolution but to barbarism as well. It is this removal of barriers and the sudden revulsion of fear as to what lies beyond them, that have most decisively marked the outlook of our age.

Basic to our malaise today is the disquieting cleavage between economics and politics. We live by what sustains life, but we think by what gives life meaning and nobility. One is economics, the other is, in its broadest sense, politics. One is

community survival, the other is community government. Liberals and Marxists have in the past differed on almost every item of belief. But one item they shared—the belief in the unity of economics and politics. The liberal held that if your political system were only good, it would allow the economic system to find its true beneficence. If only you had laws, education, freedom, then economic justice would be the eventual sequel. The Marxian view was that if only your economic base were sound, the political system would take care of itself. Liberalism and Marxism were in this sense inverted forms of each other. But we have now learned, on this score at least, that both were art forms aiming at symmetry, rather than descriptions of the actual. “Good” political systems, like those of the German republic, the French Popular Front, American democracy, English cabinet government, have been impotent to solve their economic problems. And an efficiently planned economy, like that of the Soviet Union—or even Germany, in its own sense of planning—has proved politically autocratic.

Hence our new nihilism and, what is even worse, our new luxuriant crop of desperate and short-lived beliefs. And so we seek consolation in all manner of doctrine—in the pacifism of “men of good will,” in a frustrate extreme leftism, in an opportunist communism, in a tired New Dealism, in a disbelieving liberalism, in a tedious and frightened parroting of the merits of any “middle way,” in a neo-scholasticism, in a pre-occupation not with life but with its symbols, its myths, its language.

This widespread social pessimism does not spring from decadence. It is not, like the pessimism of pre-revolutionary Tsarism or Spain after the expulsion of the Jews, the product of a class no longer able to govern, and losing itself in religious mysticism and orgiastic individualism. Nor does it spring, as the fascist theorists suggest, from the decay of western man and the failure of the democratic fiber. That democracy can

still maintain its fiber, and that it has what Ernest Hemingway once called the quality of courage—"grace under pressure"—have been adequately shown in Madrid, Barcelona, Prague, Canton. If men have revealed new and unsuspected sadisms, they have also revealed new and unsuspected heroisms. Least of all should we project our sense of bewilderment and failure into a conviction of original evil, as C. E. M. Joad, for example, seems inclined to do. I disbelieve as much in original evil and man's inherent brutality as I do in original good and man's inherent perfectibility. There is a little bit of the fascist in every one of us, and a good deal in some of us. But we must learn to distinguish between the innately brutal in the human animal, the institutionally tenacious, and the historically reactionary. Of the innately brutal we can know little, except that even when most of it is channeled and sublimated there is still an uncomfortable deposit left. Of the institutionally tenacious in us, we know the immense force of habit patterns such as are involved in the emotions and ideologies clustering about property and profits, and what brutal energies may be released when those habits are uprooted. Of the historically reactionary, we can say only that the direction of political emotions at some historical moment tells us more about the quality of our institutions than it does about our original nature.

The blame for our failure and disillusionment must fall on our idiot institutions. People seem somehow, in relation to the future, to be divided into two categories—the "optimists" and the "pessimists." The pessimists think that civilization is going to the dogs. The optimists say that, whether it is or not, we must keep up hope, and that "life somehow goes on." "Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future?" someone asks, as though he were asking: "Are you bullish or bearish about the market?" The only answer can be that, if we have as little control over our institutions as an outsider has over the fluctua-

tions of the market, then we are all lost. We mold our institutions and are molded by them. We are the hammer and the anvil. Civilization today is a death dance because of the accumulated weight of idiot institutions. Our task is the heroic one of changing and directing those institutions so that their weight will support us, instead of crushing us.

No one expects politics to be all daisies and rhododendrons. Human history is a thorny path, and it will always be tragic. But tragedy, in Nietzsche's sense, involves the triumph of the Dionysian life-giving forces in the very act of their being overwhelmed. Man's political life, like Nature, is spendthrift of its energies; there is a vast deal of ruin in it before it goes wholly to ruin; but the price of survival is militancy and social intelligence. These alone can shape institutions.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER TWO

Despite the somewhat archaic character of some of the allusions in this chapter, especially in the section on "War and Peace," there is little in the basic analysis that I would now change. I am happy that we had to learn a good deal about war and peace in the intervening years. We had to learn that, although we were not prepared to face the fascist power, it was better to join in fighting fascism even while unprepared than to wait until it was too late. We had to learn that the struggle between isolationists and interventionists was the expression in a war crisis of the basic disunity of a capitalist democracy, and that it was on this disunity that the Nazis had all along been counting. For the real split was not a split over whether we should go to war, but a split on the basic question of whether we feared democracy so much as to let it be overwhelmed or whether—for all its imperfections—we believed

in it enough to die and kill for it. We had to learn that the life-hating and life-destroying elements bred by an acquisitive society would cluster around the fascist banner, and would seek in the war emergency to destroy the things they hated. We had to learn that only in a war economy would we, by compulsion, take the steps toward full economic production which we refused to take even under the imperatives of depression; and that the armament economy that we were thus forced into could give capitalism the breathing spell it required until its strength after the war could fashion the necessary controls. We had to learn that the war, if it was to be won, had to be fought as a revolutionary war: that only by socializing the means of war production could we become "the arsenal of the democracies"; and that only by democratizing our social methods could we use them to liberate the energies everywhere hostile to the fascist dream.

But we are learning also that the very processes I speak of—of socializing a war economy, of democratizing our social methods and of fighting the war as a revolution—are likely to create new social tensions and sharpen the basic social conflicts of our time: so that the post-war period still confronts us with the task of resolving the basic problems of crisis democracies, and of heading off the forces leading to a new form of fascism. Thus we are still caught in the death dance of our civilization.

Is this a form of pessimism? I do not think so, although some of the critics of this book have been so unwary of its inner impulses as to call it defeatist. What I assert is that, so long as we do not make the attempt militantly to cleanse the body politic of its unhealth, we shall be exchanging one form of disease for another. But I believe the attempt can be made, and can succeed. The wasteland of our time is one of social injustices and the lack of a sense of collective greatness, rather than one of a basically corrupt human nature.



**CHAPTER THREE**

**THE LEFT IN RETREAT**

**1. *Logbook of the Radical Mind***

**2. *Marxism: Six Errors***

**3. *Popular Front***

**4. *The Rediscovery of the Past***

## 1. LOGBOOK OF THE RADICAL MIND

THE radical dream is the dream of human liberty, to be achieved by tearing inequality and injustice out by the roots and planting the seeds of a new order deep in social relations and institutions. To be a radical, as to be a reactionary, is therefore to be a fundamentalist, and if this involves a drastic quality that touches the imagination, it also often involves an inflexible quality that fetters the intellect and shoes the sensibilities in seven-league boots. This kinship with reaction, however, does not touch the core. It is a kinship only in a commonly shared absolutism of belief and single-mindedness of purpose. What is essential is that the radical devotes these qualities to change rather than stagnation, to human welfare rather than to the vested interests, to cultural creativeness rather than to cultural refinement, to fashioning new traditions rather than to sucking the old ones dry.

The premise of the radical is that men can, by their social intelligence, fashion their communal lives. He places an enormous emphasis, therefore, on the rational will. He believes, with Swift, that the human race is not *homo rationalis*, but that it is at least *rationis capax*. He has a quick sense of justice, an impatient desire for change, a basic trust in the common man's instincts, a faith in the common man's educability. Because his approach is rational throughout, he tends to underestimate the inertia of habit and the dead hand of institutions. As one reads how Marx and Engels studied each depression

eagerly, believing fondly that this was the one that would usher in the world revolution, one understands that the radical's heavenly city is always just around the corner. Sometimes, however, as in 1789 and 1917, he rounds the corner and the city is actually there. But it is because of his courage and his sureness and his merciless belief in his cause, and not because of what successes he may achieve, that the radical in every age captures the imagination of his fellows. He is the new barbarian, come with his hordes to reinvigorate the Roman empires of our minds.

Cross the insurgent spirit with the uncompromising bent toward social craftsmanship, and you get radicalism. It is Prometheus and Zeus at the same time, and therein is the root of its own inner conflict; for while to rail against the ruling divinities is an exhilarating thing, to play god with social destinies may be a sobering experience and blunt the edge of the insurgent in us. But while radicalism in temper is timeless, each age finds its own characteristic expression for its demonic force. In our time Marxism has gathered up and channeled the radical energies. Radicalism is, to be sure, not solely Marxism. In Spain today the more extreme revolutionary fervor is largely that of the anarcho-syndicalists; in America there is a native Populist tradition that smells strongly of the American soil rather than of European doctrine; in China, even what is called communism is more deeply rooted in an emerging nationalism and in the age-old land hunger of the Chinese peasants than in dialectical theory. But these are marginal and variants. They still leave to Marxism the main area of radical experience.

Marxian doctrine, like liberal doctrine, is a historical development, with a genealogy and a life history. But this does not strip it of its validity. There are still those who think they have disposed of some Marxian position by tracing it back to the bitterness or the ill health of a German exile from Trier or the parlor pinkness of a humanitarian factory owner of Man-

chester. But such an *ad hominem* argument has neither novelty nor force. All doctrines arise from the meeting of personal experience and historic events, and all doctrines in turn get their validity from the extent to which they illumine personal experience and explain or guide historic events.

Marxism had the enormous advantage over liberalism in being hammered out when the world of capitalist industrialism was already full-fledged, with all its principal features delineated. It could devote itself, therefore, to the task of explaining and changing that world. Its sharp analysis of the existing order in terms of class relations contrasted with the blurred outlines of the liberal hope and even more with the defensive tone of the liberal apologia. Its championship of the oppressed, its defiance of the possessors of the earth, its explanation of the past, its blueprint of the future, its masterful blending of utopian ardor and scientific rigor gave it an irresistible appeal to the generous spirits of our age. Best of all, amidst the fragmented skepticisms and pragmatisms of a world that had grown too complex for understanding, it had the daring of a nineteenth-century philosophy—the daring to be whole and to explain every phase of existence.

That is why Marxism has had in our age an influence quite out of proportion to the numbers enrolled in its cause. The recent adventures of Marxist thought comprise the logbook of the voyage of the modern mind. Statesmen sought to ignore it, industrialists lumped it with other forms of insanity, preachers inveighed against it, professors and editors ridiculed it, the middle classes barely heard of it, and even the workers were apathetic to it except when a militant leadership was able to translate it into terms of their experience. Yet those who form the vanguard of thought in any culture were everywhere infected by it. And the fervor with which it was attacked was itself a mark of the fear that the lords of the earth felt for it.

Radical hopes the world over reached their peak in the

decade and a half between the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the triumph of Hitler in 1933. The establishment of a socialist state in Russia was like the fulfillment of a Platonic dream of philosophers become kings. It meant that those conspiratorial schemings and those endless harangues that one associated with the Marxists were no longer so much sound and fury. They signified something. Here was a welding of theory and action such as the world had never seen. The function of the Left had always been considered merely that of prodding the Right out of its lethargy. But now it seemed that the "wild men" might actually conquer the world. If a successful proletarian revolution could take place in Russia, which was backward and benighted and had only a small industrial proletariat, what might not happen in Germany and England and America, with their large proletarian populations?

But five years later Mussolini was in power in Rome, on an anti-communist program, and the dream of world revolution turned into bloody counter-revolutionary nightmares in Bavaria, Hungary, Finland, China. For a decade the dream lingered on. But increasingly the radicals of the world turned their attention to the Russian achievement. It was an immense achievement in economic and cultural terms, and while there were sporadic grumblings and talk of a bureaucracy, the Russian experience had the power of actuality for us. It shifted all the perspectives of our thinking. What was valid in socialism it made concrete. When we cited the statistics on pig-iron production or car loadings or the percentage of land in collectives or the output of cheap books or the liquidation of illiteracy, we had the gritty sense of touching something beyond the reach of argument.

And so we proceeded to project the Soviet perspectives against our own landscape. Proletarian literature and art and theater, Marxian economics and philosophy, even class concepts of morality, dominated our intellectual scene. There

developed a type of thinking and temperament that was contemptuous of anything not found in the Marxian books, rejected the cultural tradition often with the assurance of ignorance, and was absurdly millennial and doctrinaire even about the minutiae of life. Radical hopes, curiously, grew most luxuriant in other countries than the Soviet Union; for the radical movements in those countries were absorbed in the revolutionary dream, without the bitter experience with the actualities of government which the Russian party had had to face. In America the apex of Marxian fervor was reached in the fall of 1932, when in the presidential election an impressive list of writers and artists signed a statement favoring the Communist ticket of Foster and Ford. The world depression of 1929 had served only to raise the hopes that were held of widespread capitalist collapse; and the bungling of the crisis by Hoover seemed to indicate the inevitable failure of any capitalist program in this hour of decision.

The triumph of Hitler in 1933 made us say good-bye to all that. Even the swift rise of the Nazi party had failed to alarm the radicals. Up to the last moment they believed that out of the chaos would emerge a Marxian government. And so the various Marxian parties and the sections of the trade-union movement, instead of uniting against the common enemy, jockeyed for strategic position in order to take advantage of the revolutionary situation. The ways in which the Nazis achieved power and the dispatch with which they consolidated it left no doubt that the radicals had been living in a world of their own imagining. It was not only the swift destruction of the trade unions and the savagery of the concentration camps that left their impression. It was even more the way in which the middle class had plumped for the Nazis and the eventual fervor of even a large section of the workers for the new regime. It was the easy destruction of the most powerful socialist and communist parties in Europe. Above all, it was the rise of

fascist sentiment in other European countries and even in America.

If there is one unmistakable result that fascism has had, it has been to change the character of the radical movement. The old aggressors were now on the defensive; the revolutionists trembled for the safety of the status quo; those who had called bourgeois art and thought decadent now hastened to the defense of the western cultural tradition. And when in 1936 the Russian trials of political offenders burst upon the world, they completed the process of disillusionment. The more tenacious revolutionists fled to a desperate extreme leftism or a milder socialism. The main body of independent radical thought allied itself to the left-wing New Dealers. The liberals who had played on the fringes of the radical movement as fellow-travelers now retreated to liberalism again, like a husband coming home after disastrous amatory adventures, and finding a loveliness in his wife that he had been blind to all along.

We live now in the period of the collapse of high radical hopes, of the mortal fear of fascism. On the whole, that is a far healthier thing for the Left movements. To be sure, the recent disasters have had their victims: not only the victims in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Spain, but (in a no less real sense) those in other countries who have suffered intellectual shell-shock at the triumphant march of fascism in Europe, and the tendencies toward a socialist totalitarianism revealed by the Russian trials. But the radical temper today is mellowed and more realistic. It makes smaller claims and is content with smaller gains. It has lost ground among the intellectuals, but those who remain are sober about their business. If it has lost in aggressiveness by replacing capitalism by fascism as the tyrant-symbol, it has gained in wisdom and realism by beginning the assimilation of democratic theory with proletarian aims. It is working realistically with the trade unions and middle-class groups. Above all else, it is willing to acknowledge

that it has made serious miscalculations, and is anxious to recast its theory and its tactic.

## 2 . M A R X I S M : S I X E R R O R S

Marxians have always bridled at any suggestion of revisionism. Eduard Bernstein was ostracized for demanding a streamlined Marxian theory in the eighteen-nineties, and every theorist who has followed him in the call for modernization has met a similar fate. Yet the fact is that Marxism, both as a theory and as a tactic, has been ever since its beginnings in process of continuous revision. The revisions have been dictated by events, by the theory in action; only they have not been called revisions because of the intense need for face-saving that is inseparable from politics. And although Marxism is a philosophy and philosophies are not supposed to behave politically, this one has been in politics with a vengeance.

Actually the Marxians today will confess to having made major errors of analysis since the Russian Revolution. Most of them will refuse to call them that, but errors of emphasis and calculation they are none the less. The drastic change in recent communist tactics is an implied confession of them. My own reckoning, as I look back over the period, counts six such miscalculations. They are, of course, interlinked; but for purposes of discussion they may be considered separately.

First, then, the underestimate of the strength of capitalism. Marxian theory, influenced by the immense prestige of Lenin after the revolution and by the fact that Lenin's thinking was largely shaped by the World War and the events preceding it, has thought of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism. Out of it, presumably, grow widespread warfare, depression, revolution. The World War seemed to fulfill this analysis. Yet, as far



as capitalism was concerned, the World War may have scotched the snake but did not kill it. Capitalism has shown an amazing tenacity since. That tenacity has taken a variety of shapes. In Germany and Italy, and Spain, the capitalists joined forces with part of the middle class in a fascist counter-revolutionary offensive. Capitalism showed that, if it had itself lost the power of a governing class, it could still govern by fascist deputy and govern with a ruthless tyranny. In England and France the capitalists used their financial power to sabotage the semi-socialist labor regimes. And while England turned to a Tory totalitarianism, France reverted to the petty-bourgeois tenacity of the Radical Socialists. In America, a New Deal administration, seeking to revive capitalism in spite of the capitalists, found their opposition stubborn and protracted. In every case the depression left the economic system down but not out, and apparently able to take more punishment if necessary.

The writers, liberals and conservatives alike, rubbed their eyes: had they been taken in all along by the Marxists? This thing called capitalism, said one, seems to have what it takes. Maybe it's all folklore, suggested another; attack and defense are just a play in our minds. America, capitalist or not, can be made a work of art, said a third. America can be saved within the capitalist framework, a fourth set out to prove. At present writing capitalism's stock is up. And the Marxians are not saying with any show of confidence that fascism is the last stage of capitalism.

Second, the overestimate of the revolutionary character of the proletariat. That there is in every country a proletarian vanguard that will fight for socialist aims, there can be no doubt. That a large number of the workers will defend themselves against attack has been shown in the resistance to the murderous Dollfuss coup in Austria in 1934 and in the resistance of the Spanish workers to Franco. But this is different

from saying that the workers can in capitalist democracies be counted on to take the offensive in the overthrow of the capitalist regime and the establishment of socialism. Nor can they be counted on even to be neutral at the critical moment. What generally happens is that in the confusion of the struggle between Left and Right enough of the workers cling to the stereotypes of their time (which are stereotypes of the Right) to split the Left forces to a degree fatal to a revolutionary offensive.

This is in no sense to be interpreted as a confession of disillusionment in the common man. His closeness to the ribbed structure of life's daily needs often makes him more sensitive to realities and more unfooled than his financial and intellectual betters. But this homely and human sense of values has thus far not added up to revolutionary force. It was mainly because of the lack of revolutionary readiness in the proletariat that 1917 proved one of the turning-points in world history that did not turn.

Third, the underestimate of the strength of the middle class and the misreckoning of its direction. Marx had originally seen the middle class as crushed between the millstones of the capitalists and the workers, and as a dwindling group. Actually, the elaboration of capitalism has made it a growing group. Marx was right about the dwindling of the small entrepreneur and the tradesman; but the new middle class is that of the corporate bureaucracy, the white-collar workers and professionals, the army of the distributive occupations. Although many of these are, as Lewis Corey has pointed out, functionally tied to the workers, the conscious ties of the class as a whole are thus far with the class of property owners whose world they envy and whose careers they think to emulate. Political movement to the Left fills them not with hope but with fear.

They are not Prometheans, these middle-class people. Their

horizons are provincial, their emotions starved, their patterns of daily living standardized. On them falls the great psychic burden of capitalism—its joyless amusements and its tinsel banality. When they feel insecure, they become frightened; when they grow frightened, they jump on the bandwagon of whatever seems strong and speaks for the status quo; and when they are on the bandwagon, once more secure in a collective sadism, they can be cruel with a cruelty that knows no bounds.

Fourth, the underestimate of the strength of the nationalist idea. This has been a weakness of Marxism since the beginning. It flows partly from the fact that the national concept seemed to run counter to the class concept, partly from the international framework of the revolutionary labor movement and the international character of a future socialist society, partly from a shrewd recognition that patriotism is always the last refuge of the oppressor. Thus the Marxians made the mistake of taking what is probably the most powerful emotional force in modern history and handing it over to the enemy. The Hitlers and Mussolinis did not lose a trick in exploiting their advantage. For the masses to have been less responsive to nationalist slogans would have meant to turn their backs on five centuries of European history. To reject or transcend one's country, as to reject or transcend one's family and circle of friends, can be done if you steel yourself to it, and you may even get a martyr's thrill from the process. But revolutions are made by going with, and not against, the strong emotional currents of the age.

In Soviet Russia the Marxians got a clue to their error. They discovered that the class concept and the nation concept could lie down side by side, and that while the workers ought not perhaps to have a fatherland, they were happier and a good deal more cohesive when they did. To change human nature does not mean to change human emotions; it means to change social institutions in such a way that the emotions are rechanneled.

Which brings us, fifthly, to the faulty theory of human

nature in politics. Marxian psychology was archaic even when Marx wrote; it was a metaphysician's psychology. It has grown even more archaic with the new insights offered by experimental psychology and by the psychoanalysts. Briefly, its error is to see men as too rational in their public conduct, and to assign to their public conduct too large an area of their lives. In a sense the Marxians are Ciceronians, writing a new *De Officiis*. Actually, however, men's interest or attention-span on political or economic matters is shorter than we like to think. And when they do act in public affairs, they are as irrational as in their private lives—as insecure, fear-ridden, hunger-driven, hatred-obsessed, animal-like. These reaches of what Freud has called “depth-psychology” the fascists, for all their abuse of the *Kulturbolscheismus* of Freudianism, have understood and exploited. The Marxians are only now beginning to catch up.

Finally, the misreckoning on proletarian dictatorship. The complete and ruthless power, even though temporarily, of the proletariat in its march toward a classless state is a root-idea of Marxism. But the question arises, how long this dictatorship will last, and what form it will take. From the past decade of Soviet history we have begun to understand that political power may have its inner structure and its life history fully as much as economic power; that the problems of group conflict and tyranny are not automatically solved when the means of production are socialized; and that the need for a proletarian dictatorship must be minimized, its time-span shortened, and channels found for the expression of political opposition in the socialist states of the future.

We have erred, the Marxians may say, on all these counts. “But,” they may add, “our heads are bloody but unbowed. It is not only we who have made mistakes. True, we have misjudged trends and allowed our thinking to follow the outlines of our desires. But you, too, have failed; you statesmen who have blindly sought to direct state policy; you progressives who

have never seen beyond the immediate moment; you liberals who have been sunshine patriots but have in the crisis betrayed your own liberal ideals. If we have failed, our failure is but part of the failure of the whole progressive tradition of western thought."

Their plea in avoidance must be accepted along with their confession. What remains is to note that the errors I have discussed by no means invalidate Marxian thought. Primarily they are errors in emphasis and calculation, rather than in the basic method of analysis. Marxism in its subtler moods understands that capitalism is tenacious, men irrational, the middle class insecure, the workers still held in the grip of middle-class ideas. While Marxism in action has not understood these things sufficiently, Marxism as a method of analysis does not by that fact lose its validity. Capitalism still shows its essential contradictions. If it will take a more supple and subtle economic theory to explain them, Marxism has at least pointed the direction. Its great strength lies in its theory of history, its method of class analysis, its well-knit interrelation of the aspects of society, its sense of direction, its insistence on the unbroken web of theory and practice. It is still, for all its shortcomings, the most useful and illuminating body of social thought in our world.

But it is in no sense a completed body of thought. The technique of social change is as much a process of invention and correction as is that of technological change. The great inventions still lie in the future. The great theories have yet to be formulated.

### 3 . P O P U L A R F R O N T

Meanwhile the Left is content with gradualism and a common front with progressive groups against fascism. Those who

oppose the Stalin regime and the Comintern policy throughout the world will say that the Left must by no means be equated with the Communist parties. That is true, and it is one of the premises on which this book rests. But let us not delude ourselves into thinking that a world movement like communism can be manipulated by a few men sitting in the Kremlin, or that it can be subordinated to the foreign policy of a single country like the Soviet Union. It is not only the Communists who are on the defensive. The Communists happen to be so organized that they route their policy-making through a central body, and move to its decisions in disciplined formations. Their shifts and backings stand out because military maneuvers lack the fluidity that intellectuals demand in the growth of policy. But the Communists make their decisions and do what they do in response to world forces that have left their mark on the consciousness of all the radical groups. For the truth is that the whole Left is on the defensive.

And because it is on the defensive, the radicals have suspended their former hopes and are chiefly seeking to consolidate their lines, and find allies who will stand with them in a phalanx against the common enemy. The problem now is one of sheer survival. The radical dream of the achievement of power is being pushed into the indefinite future.

The policy of the Popular Front <sup>1</sup> is being experimented with by the Left groups in France, Spain, Great Britain, America, China, and the Scandinavias—at all the strategic points of the campaign of history. It represents a peace pact struck between the proletarian parties, the trade-union groups, and the liberals of the middle class—a pact of defense against fascism, but one that may also in the long run be used in an offensive for the

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<sup>1</sup> This section is not intended as a full analysis of the Popular Front policy. That policy is viewed here only from the angle of the dilemma of the radicals. For further analysis of the Popular Front as part of the career of the crisis state, see Chapter VII, sec. 4 ("Labor and the Middle Class") and sec. 5 ("Toward a Labor Party").

winning of socialist power. The whole notion of such a pact is a daring and difficult one. As a union of groups that have been at each other's throats and still cherish a deeply rooted distrust of each other, it would seem unstable in the extreme. But if its difficulties are great, its stakes are high. For to heal the old wounds and immobilize the old antagonisms is a pre-condition for a successful defense against a fascist thrust, and for the precious breathing-spells in which the progressive groups can gather their strength to move forward toward socialism.

But the means by which alone such a policy can be successful are also elements of its weakness. The workers must collaborate with middle-class parties on the basis of the nationalist sentiment so dear to the middle class and so necessary as a rallying-cry against fascist tendencies. Yet this same nationalism can with equal force be used against the workers when their aim is socialist advance. Again, it is easier to organize workers along straight trade-union lines as a barricade against fascism than it is to organize them along revolutionary lines. Yet pure-and-simple unionism does not carry with it any particular social direction; and the English experience shows that a trade-union movement thus organized may turn out to be not only indifferent but actually hostile to socialism. Finally, a Popular Front government, however long it may survive through concessions to the Right, is likely to be short-lived. It is an enormously difficult task to gain enough power for pushing through reforms drastic enough to ensure against economic collapse. And when this eventual collapse comes, masses and middle class alike may be so disillusioned at the indecisive measures of the Popular Front, that they will welcome a dictatorship of the Right.

This is the essence of the attack from the extreme Left on the Popular Front tactic. That the middle class cannot be trusted to take the necessary steps in common action for democratic survival; that the concession to the myth of the nation-

state and the myth of the sanctity of property serves only to confuse the workers; that when the capitalist elements in a Popular Front have achieved their aim of meeting a foreign menace or draining off the revolutionary energy of the Left groups, they will not hesitate to scrap it because its usefulness to them is over; and that when the decisive conflict comes, those who have been waiting for Leftism will learn that while they have been talking, it has been found down at the railroad yards with a bullet through its head.

I set out the case against the Popular Front with as much cogency as I know how. I should like its opponents to think that even one who disagrees with their position can state it fairly. Nor am I concerned about defending the tactic of the Popular Front in all the major moves it has made in France, Spain, China, Austria, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, America. There is a kernel of soundness in the philosophy of a Popular Front, even though there have been tragic errors in applying it.

In Spain, the Popular Front government, once it had attained power, was nerveless in consolidating it. The Spanish people were faced by open preparations for a mutinous army coup. This was an extraordinary challenge to the existence of the state; it should have been met by extraordinary measures of suppression in the interest of the safety of the state—measures to which the necessity for the insurance of democracy would have given the stamp of legality. Instead of that the Azaña government waited until the mutiny had become a civil war, and until, by the logic of fascist aggression, the civil war was transformed into an unequal war of world fascism against democratic Spain. In Austria the Popular Front was not forged until too late. Had it come before the Dollfuss massacre of the Vienna workers, the history of Europe might have been different. But it came when the proletarian resistance had been decimated, and was not strong enough to nerve the Schu-



schnigg government to resistance. In Czechoslovakia the lessons of Spain and Austria were learned; but foreign weakness and treachery proved decisive. In China the Popular Front tactic has thus far been successful; but its great danger lies in its being scrapped by the Nationalist government either when the Japanese danger has been successfully met, or when further resistance would seem to lead only to Communist control of the war. In France, where the experience with Popular Front tactics under peacetime conditions has been longest, grave mistakes of policy have been made. Forgetting that the fight against fascism in the realm of foreign policy is the greatest unifying force in a Popular Front, the Communists and Socialists both compromised with a policy of the betrayal of Spain by the Blum government; and the Socialists have allowed their fear of war to stifle their protests at Daladier's betrayal of Czechoslovakia. The Popular Front has allowed the Radical Socialists under Daladier to use the danger of German attack as a weapon with which to extort concessions from the Left and save the centrist ministries from defeat. In Great Britain the Popular Front tactic is still in its incipient stage; in the first place, the Labour Party is not willing to make common cause with the Communists and Liberals; secondly, the Labour Party has not been entrusted with the government since the disastrous MacDonald fiasco. In America the Popular Front is pretty much a one-sided affair, because neither the Communists nor Socialists are strong enough to get concessions for what support they may give a New Deal administration. Their strength lies only in their influence on the trade-union movement; and their efforts are therefore, quite soundly, being directed toward the building of a strong labor organization without which an eventual democratic front with the left wings of the capitalist parties is impossible.

In pursuing these policies, there have been not only errors of tactic but excesses of temper as well. The Communists

especially, in France, Spain, America, have, in their zeal for winning the confidence of the middle class, gone beyond the limits of wisdom. This was to be expected. The traditional extremism of the radical is such that when he turns to a policy of moderation, it becomes an extremist moderation.

But the basic soundness of a Popular Front as the radical tactic in the present dilemma rests on the immediate need for democratic survival. We are in a period when the collapse of a capitalist democracy is bound to lead not to the chance of establishing a proletarian democracy but to the certainty of a capitalist dictatorship. A revolutionary attempt from the left, under such conditions, would be adventurist; and even its small chance of success would depend on a ruthless use of violence, which would array the marginal middle-class elements with the Right. Under such conditions the policy of a Popular Front is not a choice. It is a necessity. One may well challenge the extent to which it should go, and question where the Left should place its emphasis. But the fact is that the path of radical survival and advance depends upon laying a solid base for it in an alliance with the liberal middle-class elements. Radicalism cannot afford any doctrine of class purity. Before the workers can capture power, they and their organizations must survive. And survival depends upon a common front with other groups who have in common with the workers a stake in the continuance at least of democratic forms.

You can't cut corners in history. That was tried in the years after the Russian Revolution, and it failed. If you wish to move toward socialism with a maximum of certainty and a minimum of violence, you must carry the balance-of-power middle-class groups with you as far as they will possibly go. If violence has to come, let it be thrust upon you by capitalist resistance to democratic advance. And meet it as a legal government that has a clear claim to the support of everyone with a stake in the democratic tradition.

One word, however, of warning. No city was ever captured by a force moving in retreat. A retreat is a strategic necessity; its only excuse is that it is a movement toward more favorable ground, and that it gives a chance for rallying one's forces for a new advance. Socialism will never be achieved by the negative slogan of avoiding fascism or even saving democracy. The one is a resistance to reaction; the other a conserving of the best in our past. But once these ends have been achieved, the democratic forces must move forward with militancy, in a fight not *against* something but for something. The basis of a Popular Front must be not only a pact with the middle class against fascism, but a pact of all progressive groups for the privilege of sharing in the adventure of democratic socialization.

#### 4. THE REDISCOVERY OF THE PAST

Every generation needs to know what it is fighting against, whom it is fighting with, what it is fighting for. The progressives and radicals of our generation want to fight against corporate capitalism and fascist capitalism—against the second because of its barbarism, against the first not only because of its tyrannical power and its periodic products of depression and war but also because it may turn into the second. They want to fight with the aid of labor and middle-class allies. They want to fight for a democratic collectivism.

To me the most important new development in the radical movement does not lie in its replacement of capitalism by fascism as the tyrant-symbol, nor even in its Popular Front tactic, with its new consciousness of the value of the middle class as an ally. It lies in its rediscovery of the past. For anti-fascism is a slogan, and the Popular Front a tactic; and slogans

and tactics are subject to change. But the rediscovery of the past may mark an experience in the radical movement second in importance only to the discovery of the future. "I have seen the future," wrote Lincoln Steffens from the Soviet Union, "and it works." Our own discovery, a generation after the Russian Revolution, may be set down in somewhat similar terms. We have looked back to history, and we have found a usable past—and one that we can call ours. And such a discovery of the past, if it is sincere and deeply experienced, may set us on our own path to the future.

This new attitude toward the past shows itself in various ways: the rediscovery of the value of patriotism for the progressive cause, a new respect for the history-rooted traits of the national character, a new sense of the cultural tradition and its value, a new sense of the positive aspects of the liberal tradition and the creativeness of the democratic tradition. The rise of fascism made the radicals reconsider the value of the cultural heritage of the western world. But, especially, it made them reconsider the value of the past as a political myth. The fascists, for all their trampling on the achievements of the past, had used for their own purposes the sense of security it evokes. When the Marxians dismissed the past and rallied the people to the future as a work of art, the people were afraid because the future was insecure. But when the fascists in conscripting the future did not neglect the past, and promised the people a linkage with the heroic achievements of national history and national tradition, the people felt that here was security. And the radicals had a bitter lesson to learn about the uses of the past.

Their new fervor for traditionalism has, however, both its naïve and its dangerous aspects. The rediscovery by the American Communists of Aaron Burr as the Trotsky of the post-revolutionary period, and of his trial as the parallel to the Moscow trials, is naïve; so also is the inference that Jefferson was

the Stalin of his day. The attempt to reinterpret the Reconstruction period after the Civil War in terms that will make either revolutionaries of Lincoln and some of his Cabinet members or heroes of some of the Republican Radicals, is dangerous in the extreme. It requires a skilled hand to avoid the shoals and rocks on such a historical voyage, and a skilled hand is not always to be found among the radical mariners.

The dangerous aspect is that in its zeal the new patriotism may foster the war feeling. The attitude of the radicals toward war has always, in theory at least, been hostile and sceptical. It has not shared the pacifist horror of violence and destruction, although it has been willing to use pacifism for its purposes. Marx's "The proletariat has no Fatherland" and Lenin's "Turn the imperialist war into civil war" give both the theory and temper of the Marxian position on patriotism and war in a world of capitalist nations. Some of the French socialists, led with characteristic Gallic élan by Gustave Hervé, even made something of a cult of *anti-patriotisme* before the World War. And the voting of war credits by the powerful socialist parties in Germany and France was held a prime betrayal by both the socialist and communist parties after the war. In terms of this tradition, the new willingness of radical parties all over the world to fight side by side with capitalist imperialisms in a war against the fascist powers is a drastic about-face. But it represents a genuine and deep change in sentiment. In Great Britain, France, the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Belgium, the Balkan and Danubian countries, Spain, China, America, many of the radicals are either fighting or ready to fight or urging the building of armaments. This is true not only of responsible party officials and trade-union leaders; it is especially true of the younger men, whose sincerity is attested by the offer of their lives.

More than anything since the Moscow trials, this issue has deepened the split among the left groups in America. The basic

question between them is: which is more to be fought—war or fascism? One group says: "We hate fascism; even war would be preferable." The other group says: "We hate fascism; but the one thing to be avoided in fighting it is war, because war would be certain to bring fascism." One keeps its eyes on the advance of fascism abroad, hoping to stop that advance and thereby create a world framework within which a democratic socialism can survive. The other keeps its eye on internal tyrannies and the internal struggle for socialism, hoping to create a "pool of sanity" here, amidst the general maelstrom of war madness and fascist madness. The interesting fact to note is that while the bent of one is anti-fascist, and of the other anti-war, the emotional premise of both is a new stress on nationalism. This manifests itself as much in the work of non-Communist progressives (cf. Louis Adamic's *My America* and Jerome Frank's *Save America First*) as in the writing of Communists (cf. Granville Hicks's *I Like America*) or in the party slogan: "Communism is twentieth-century Americanism."

For the fact is that progressives and radicals alike, with the exception of the extreme revolutionary Left, are engaged in a new Research Magnificent—the rediscovery of the nation and of the sentiments that cluster around it. This is part of radicalism in retreat. What the World War did was to intensify nationalism, in both the victorious and the defeated areas. For the two decades since the war, radicalism and fascism have been locked in the embrace of a mortal struggle. But it has proved an unequal struggle, partly because the radicals surrendered to the fascists the nation concept, with its encrusted strength of the past three centuries. Hence the attempt to retrieve the error—an attempt being made on the battlefields of the world and in the tactical preparations for battles to come.

A strange new amalgam is arising, in Europe, in the Near and Far East, in America—an amalgam, such as history has never seen, of proletarian and nationalist ideals. The young

men in Persia and Egypt and China, even among the Kaffirs on the Rand, are more and more asking questions that run in terms of economic need and class equality, and are more and more answering them in terms of proletarian power and of national unity and greatness. The Soviet Union has found an admirable fusion of the two. Spain and China, whatever happens to them ultimately, have glimpsed it. In America we are still going through the agony of trying to fuse the elements of the amalgam, and square our impulses of the present with our habits of the past. What the resolution will be, it is too early to say.

But I have a deep conviction that the future belongs neither to the proletarian nor to the nationalist concept alone, but to a fusion of the two—the two most powerful movements of the modern world. Even fascism is a bastard combination of both, heavily weighted in the direction of nationalism, and a spurious nationalism at that. But the fascist powers which, like Germany and Italy, put their workers into a fake “Labor Front” or “corporations,” or which, like Japan, use the whole apparatus of the state to crush “dangerous thoughts,” are likely to find that in time the revolutionary ferment will burst such bonds. The radical movements, on their side, are wise to give recognition and scope to the nationalist impulses even among workers. The future of the world, for all the bludgeon diplomacy of the fascist states, lies outside the realm of bluster and diplomacy. It is not hard to guess that it belongs to the countries with rich natural and human resources, great slumbering democratic energies, nationalisms beginning to feel their full stature. My own guess is that those countries include Russia, China, and—if I may dare to say so—America.

For it takes great courage to include America in any framework of world trends. It is one of the traits of the nationalist revival that progressives in America are talking more than ever in terms of American exceptionalism. Whatever may be true

of world trends, we are told, they will not affect America, which by its geographical isolation, its economic self-sufficiency, its continental integration, its unique cultural tradition, has a destiny of its own. This theory of exceptionalism itself testifies to the strength of the nationalist impulse. Every nation, Michels has pointed out, has its *Mythus des Woher* and its *Mythus des Wohin*—its myth of unique national origin and its myth of unique national destiny. We find it intolerable to be merged with the rest of the world. Even Sinclair Lewis, who wrote a book the ironic logic of which seemed to include America in the picture of world forces, is now anxious to point out that it really can't happen here. I am not arguing now against the theory of American exceptionalism: a proper estimate of it could be made only on the basis of an extended analysis of the case of America in relation to world trends. Judged, however, by the number of nations which lay claim to being exceptions to the drift of world forces, it looks as if exceptionalism has become the rule rather than the exception. All that I am concerned to point out is that a proper respect for our unique national traits does not require us to become secessionists from world history. There is an important difference between exceptionalism on the one hand, and a recognition that whatever happens to America (or China or Italy or Turkey or Spain) will represent a coloring of world trends by unique national traits and traditions.

In America, as in France and perhaps in Great Britain, the important tradition that will strongly influence whatever collectivist destiny the future may hold for us is the democratic tradition. Because this tradition offers a common ground for anti-fascist action both among the democracies and among the liberal groups within a democracy, it has become a basic part of the radical's rediscovery of the past—as basic as the rediscovery of patriotism, nationalism, exceptionalism. Of the meaning of this democratic tradition I want to speak at greater length



in the next chapter. To the radical movement it has given a new breadth and moderation, a new sense of continuity between the battlefields of today and the historic battlefields of the past. The radical has, to a curious degree, become a traditionalist.

All this has its dangers. Radicalism has traditions: witness the forging, despite the paradox, of a revolutionary tradition from the Gracchi to Lenin—a tradition with a definite pattern of idea and sentiment and behavior. But while the radical cannot dispense with traditions, he must create his own. He cannot afford merely to borrow and adapt. He must transform what he borrows until it has become material out of which he can forge a transformed future.

### NOTE TO CHAPTER THREE

The turning point of the retreat of the Left was reached in 1941 with the Nazi invasion of Russia. The Communists came to understand that their fatal enemy was fascism, and that to temporize with it for any reasons of principle or opportunism was to court disaster. On their own side the democracies came to understand the power of resistance of the Russians, and reluctantly paid homage not only to a fighting people but to a fighting faith and a realistic analysis of social forces. Hitler's attack on Russia was a move not only in the strategy of arms but also in the strategy of ideas. He sought by it to drive the wedge deeper between those in the democracies who feared socialism more than fascism and those who kept their eye on Nazi barbarism as the enemy. He did not succeed. Yet his failure was not complete. Many in America and Britain who paid lip homage to Russia were not without a private yet none

the less fervent prayer that the Germans and the Russians would destroy each other; or a secret notion, after the war, to form a union sacrée against Russia. To keep such elements unified in support of Russia during the war required a form of social appeasement within the democracies that often put the exactly wrong men in the decisive posts.

When I wrote the section on the "Popular Front" in 1938, there was still a chance that the democracies would awaken from their deep slumber, not only to common international action but also to unified internal action. In its international aspects of "collective security," the Popular Front was wounded in Spain, died at Munich, and was buried in the Nazi-Soviet pact. The imperatives of the war eventually compelled us to reconstruct it in the working mechanism of the United Nations. The section on the Popular Front may serve, however, as a melancholy memorial to an earlier period when action might have been taken to avert disaster. I may add that the Popular Front as a social tactic was never central in my thinking. This book was never, as Sidney Hook charged it with being, in his analysis of it in the *Partisan Review* ("The Anatomy of the Popular Front"), a rationalization of the tactic. What is central in it is the conception of a humanist and militant democracy, separated from that of the Communists by a wide moral gulf. The tactics by which that objective can be reached depend upon the shifting historical situation; the objective itself does not admit of any shift.

At the same time that this chapter was attacked by the inveterate anti-Communists, it was also attacked by the inveterate Communists. But events in the intervening years have, if anything, strengthened my conviction that the analysis held then and holds now. I did not seek to scrap Marxism but to make what was usable in it part of a wider social theory that has (I hope) profited from the light shed by the world's trials upon the nature of man as a political animal.

CHAPTER FOUR

**DEMOCRACY:  
MASK AND FACE**

1. *Mask for Oligarchy*
2. *On This Continent*
3. *If You Mean Democracy*
4. *What Is Militant?*

## 1 . MASK FOR OLIGARCHY

OF the many things we have done to democracy in the past, the worst has been the indignity of taking it for granted. But out of the wrack of recent events has emerged a new sense of its attractiveness. We are living today on the thin edge of history, and that does an enormous amount to change our perspectives. The result is that democracy in America has become an ardently wooed maiden, beleaguered by suitors. Liberals, trade unionists, businessmen, professional patrioteers, reactionaries, even revolutionists and fascists pay her at least a glowing lip-devotion. We ought to be a bit wary about this sudden and excessive love. Not all of it is sincere. We are a capitalist democracy. And I believe that three-quarters of the people who talk of democracy as the American "middle way" between the extremes of fascism and communism use the term because it enables them to soft-pedal their primary purpose of entrenching the capitalist power. What they really mean is capitalist democracy, only they prefer to leave the adjective out.

It would be easier to see through the uses to which democracy is put if we were not so accustomed to view it as a universal. Most recently Thomas Mann, in an eloquent appreciation of the value and creative strength of democracy, based that appreciation on the premise that democracy is one of the inherent and universal polar expressions of the human character. I ventured in a comment to disagree, only to have a writer in the *Wall Street Journal* exhibit me as an example

of the essential contempt of the neo-liberals for democracy and their anxiety to truncate it for their own purposes. Thus the great German exile and the Wall Street spokesman both seemed to agree that democracy was a universal—the one out of his exceeding need for believing that the ultimate victory of democracy over barbarism was rooted in human nature, the other out of the desire of his class to give permanence not only to the democratic part of capitalist democracy, but to the capitalist part as well. Actually democracy is inherent in man only in the sense that there is an inherent decency and fellowship and dignity in human beings, just as there is an inherent cruelty and cunning and self-seeking and lust for power. Which is to say that democracy, like oligarchy or dictatorship or aristocracy, must work with what traits it finds in the human animal.

But there is no permanent democratic norm in government. And the tendency to view the new age of despots as a departure from such a norm is a wishful distortion of focus. Actually, if any generalization can be drawn on this score from the past, democracy must be viewed as the great experiment of history. Men have always found dictatorship the easier way—to surrender themselves to one-man rule, personal imperialisms, dynastic rivalries, intolerance, racial hatred. The sort of womb-retreat that fascism represents is nothing new in the history of political societies. Men have always found it easy to be governed. What is hard for them is to govern themselves.

Democracy then must be seen, like any other form of political organization, in the focus of history. There have been primitive communities, such as those of the American Indian tribes, that have achieved a democratic organization. The Greek city-states and the Roman republic set democratic standards that have become classic in our political science, although Sparta was a fascist garrison state and the Roman empire became a capitalist oligarchy and finally a military dicta-

torship. The North European tribes who swarmed over the Roman empire in its decline and fall fused some of their tribal customs with the medieval residues of the democracy of the primitive Christian church to form the core of representative government. In its struggle for more adequate representation and for more responsible government, the middle class used the democratic political institutions as it used the liberal idea-system on its road to power. In a series of revolutions—of the English people against the English absolute monarchy, of the American colonies against the British government, of the French people against the French absolute monarchy—and in the writings of the *philosophes* and theorists and statesmen that accompanied these revolutions, the shape of democratic government was hammered out. All this took place in a period of commercial and industrial expansion. The increased national income broadened the margin of tolerance for political experiment. Democracy was, in a sense, made possible by the new wealth of capitalism. But as capitalism came to its phase of contraction, and as new strains set in, capitalism became an end in itself, eager to hold onto power against the threat of democratic control, willing to manipulate the democratic machinery for its purposes and, in the end, even to destroy democracy.

The true face of the capitalist oligarchy in the modern state has been hidden by the democratic mask it has assumed. We have the illusion of being the masters of our political destiny. Few of us understand that the real masters do not appear in the schoolbooks or even the college texts, in which the democratic framework is set out with a blueprint precision. The Great War was fought, Mr. Wilson told us, to make the capitalist world safe for democracy. But he never told us of the enormous effort and ingenuity that, for centuries before the war, had been poured into making democracy safe for the capitalist world. In Great Britain the House of Lords, the residual Crown itself, the system of safely rotten boroughs, the mas-

sive weight of unwritten political tradition, the centuries-old conservatism of the law courts, the iron rivets of an imperial structure, the pyramiding of power in the hands of a prime minister who in turn is subject to the checks of a party hierarchy and behind that to a landowning aristocracy and a financial oligarchy; in France the Senate as a reactionary super-chamber, the kept press, the massive and corrupt bureaucracy, the venal and cruel imperial officialdom, the army officered by a fascist élite, the strangle-hold of the munitions and heavy industries, the concealed ropes and pulleys for ministerial scene-shifting; in America—but the case of America, the world's most vaunted democracy, deserves discussion by itself.

What needs saying here is that no inconsiderable amount of talent in the three outstanding capitalist democracies has been invested in keeping the democratic machinery under control. In the American South, the large underlying population of Negroes, in many of the states a majority, were translated after the Civil War from the lowly condition of slaves to the altitude of free voters. Today, three-quarters of a century after the event, they still do not vote or hold office, and because they have no political weight, they are the more easily underpaid, socially segregated, ill-housed and ill-schooled, lynched without any protection from the law. The methods of stifling their political voice have been the crude methods of force and fraud. Their case is extreme. Yet in its very extremism it illumines the motives for which and the processes by which in general democracy has been kept safe for capitalism. The Negroes, the Southern whites will tell you, cannot be allowed to vote: it would end in an abattoir of bloodshed, corruption, waste, and rape. They have in them the childlike and the barbaric. They must be guided and kept down.

So too with democracy in the large. The people, we are told, cannot be allowed an untrammelled majority will; it would lead to expropriation, tyranny, Bolshevism. The masses are child-

like and barbaric; they must be guided and kept down. Checks must be provided on their power; stability must be given by keeping the reins in the hand of an oligarchic *élite*. The argument, of course, cannot be as crude or as frank as the Southerner will state the case for his garrison state. For the purpose of smoothing out the argument and giving it philosophic depth and literary polish, we have political philosophers, the lords of the press, the commentators who roar or purr daily in the newspaper columns. Nor can the devices be as crude as grandfather clauses and lynchings. To give refinement to them we have lawyers and statesmen. But the sum of the matter is the same. A freely functioning democracy would not tolerate the enormous concentration of corporate power in the midst of our economic anarchy. Hence, while we may have government of the people, and to an extent, even for the people, we must be denied the extravagance of government by the people.

And now let us turn to the case of America. Let us examine the historic relations between capitalism and democracy in the new nation that our fathers brought forth on this continent.

## 2. ON THIS CONTINENT

American history needs rewriting. We have had a filio-pietistic school of historians, succeeded by a constitutionalist school, succeeded by a school that emptied archives into notebooks and burrowed odds-and-ends from newspaper files, succeeded by a moving-frontier school, succeeded by an economic interpretation school, succeeded by a social history and dramatic color school. There must be room, among these interpretations, for the story of the life-and-death struggle in American history between majority will and minority rule. I mean the



struggle between the democratic mass, striving to fulfill the original revolutionary impetus, and the oligarchies of land and credit, striving to hold that impetus in check, and bolstered in their effort by an *élite* of university and bar—the whole struggle taking place in the framework of a continent opened, exploited, and appropriated by an expanding and finally contracting capitalism.

There have been excellent fragments of this story written, and even partial syntheses. But it must remain for someone of our own political generation to extract the fullest meaning of it for the present time of troubles. It must be someone writing in the intellectual climate of collapsing cultures and rising despotisms, of crisis states, of unsuspected tenacity in the old oligarchies, of new structures of the collective economic will, new values given to civil liberties and majority rule, new claims staked out for the dominance of the *élite*, new mass heroisms and sadisms. History, Maitland said, should be written backward. Only from the tragic vantage-point of today's battlefields can we see what to look for on yesterday's horizon.

The basic story in the American past, the only story ultimately worth the telling, is the story of the struggle between the creative and the frustrating elements in the American democratic adventure. For it was, to start with, a sheer adventure—a wild experiment with the organization of human society in somewhat the sense in which the Soviet Union was viewed as an experiment after the revolution. In much the fashion in which the young intellectuals and businessmen and trade unionists have been visiting Russia in the past decade, so Europe in the early decades of our history sent its travelers to America, to observe and make their report. Tocqueville and Beaumont, two young Frenchmen, made a tour of America in the 1830's, almost a half-century after the revolution. Tocqueville, whose report became a famous book, was both fascinated

and fearful. Here was *la démocratie*, that leveling force which had swept France in its own revolution, embodied now in political institutions and new social habits in these coastal cities and these flats along the Ohio. Here was, Tocqueville wrote with some trepidation—for he was a polished young European, and something of a financial man, and a bureaucrat to boot—here was the upsurging energy of the democratic mass, a torrent as strong and muddy as the waters of the Ohio. Tocqueville was right. The democratic energy, released on this continent as never before in history, with a new vision of collective effort and a new pride in the dignity of the individual, was strong enough to inspire both awe and trepidation. Its leveling force might go too far, and level away the power of those whom Fisher Ames called “the wise, the rich, and the good.”

The ways by which this energy has been held in check are the familiar material of American political science. From the *Federalist* to the lead editorial in this morning's newspaper, they have become part of the folklore of our oligarchy. The early conservative theorists, like Hamilton and Jay and John Adams and even James Madison, had steeped themselves to good purpose in the writings of John Locke and other spokesmen for the English property-holders. Powers were to be split, controls balanced, checks placed on the operation of the majority principle. The supreme power of judicial review, at first only hinted at with caution, was finally entrenched in the American constitutional scheme. Thus the propertied groups could count on having a praetorian guard in the form of the Supreme Court, whose function it became to strike down radical state legislation that might aim at economic democracy, and later to strike down federal legislation that might hurt the hegemony of the corporation. The court, through its veto power, became the bottleneck of legislative policy. At first,

there was some notion of keeping the choice of the president in the hands of a small group through the device of the Electoral College; when this fell through, the indirect selection of Senators was held onto as long as possible. At first, there was also some notion of a single-party system, and all attempts to form a party differentiated from the Federalist group in control were frowned upon as "faction." But when the party system developed, it became imperative to capture and corrupt it.

It is at this point that capitalism and democracy most significantly touch. The hierarchy of "bosses" and "machines" from the county unit to the National Committee of the party, the perquisites of patronage and graft, the underwriting of propaganda, the generous financing of campaigns, the outright buying of elections when everything else failed, all attest to the power of money in politics. The Republican campaign of 1896, under the guidance of Mark Hanna, represented the apex of the application of business strategy and resources to the winning of an election. The genius of business enterprise was helpful at other points too—in the use of terrorism and vigilantism for smashing the trade-union structures on which democratic political power might be built—but above all in the corruption of the popular mind through the business control of the basic channels of communication.

In these ways has the economic oligarchy in America sought to accomplish the fettering of the majority will and the erosion of the democratic sense. That it has been only partly successful is due to the original impetus of the democratic tradition and the factors favorable for its maintenance. For it is curious that the very things that have kept American capitalism so amazingly alive have also kept the democratic tradition alive—the buoyancy of living in a country of rich natural resources, the vitality and mobility of the population, the crossing of the best of Old World stocks and Old World cultures and ideas in the New World, the innovating force that comes from the pace

of technical change, the traditions of liberty and the militancy in defense of them.

At critical stages in the struggle with plutocratic control, there have been upsurges of democratic strength: in the Jeffersonian "revolution" of 1800; in the "Young Nationalist" movement of the next decade; in the Jacksonian movement of the thirties, reaching its high points of democratic militancy in the Bank War, and of democratic theory in Dorr's Rebellion; in the Abolitionist movement of the forties and fifties, merging with Northern and Western capitalism in a strange alliance to crush the slave power; in the uncompromising stand of the Radical Republicans, on the issue of Reconstruction; in the Granger Rebellion that swept the state legislatures in the farm areas and led to the first counter-assault upon the trusts; in the insurgent Populism of the nineties, culminating in the memorable leadership of John P. Altgeld and in Bryan's remarkable campaign of 1896; in the successive phases of the organization of militant labor, starting with the Working Men's Party in the 1830's and reaching through the Knights of Labor to the revolutionary fervor of the forces under Eugene V. Debs; in the first great Farmer-Labor formation under "Fighting Bob" La Follette in 1912; in the progressivism first of Theodore Roosevelt, then of Woodrow Wilson; in the democratic alliance of progressive and left-wing forces under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal administration; in the sweep of the industrial unionism movement under John L. Lewis and the other leaders of the CIO.

These successive upthrusts of the majority will, each drawing strength from its own segment of the American experience and each an accession to the vigor of the democratic mass, leave no doubt that despite corporate powers and the financial oligarchy, the American democratic principle is still one to be reckoned with.

### 3. IF YOU MEAN DEMOCRACY

If you mean the democracy you profess, then, you phrase-mongers—what do you face? What is the direction of the experience and aspiration of these groups I have just mentioned, who constitute the American majority? What is the projection, in the America of today, of the thinking of the leaders whose names I have set down? What are the implications of democracy as a creative and regenerative force in a world living in the sterile shadow of brutal absolutism?

Democracy means, first of all, political and civil liberties, without stint or qualification—the protection of the rights both of the minority and of the majority through constitutional guarantees. There is one caveat, which we have not had to utter to ourselves until the recent experience of Germany and Italy and Spain, when democracies stood powerless before the depredations of squadrists and storm troopers, and the marshaling of private armies created a state within a state. That caveat is that political liberties extend only to the normal political procedures of the electoral system, and not to treason; and that civil liberties extend to liberties of speech, thought, press, assembly, and organization, but not to the creation of military or semi-military units to “teach the young idea to shoot” with a projectile not wholly intellectual. Liberty cannot extend to actions which present a clear and present danger to the existence of the democratic state itself, or to the established procedures for the succession of power within that state. But, within these limits, it must be liberty for all: for Nazis as for Communists, for South as for North, for sharecroppers as for stock-brokers. Democracy includes also the equality of all groups before the law, whatever their race, color, religious persuasion, political belief, as it includes the tolerance of all creeds. In this sense it is worth noting that democracy, as the more

comprehensive concept, includes all that is affirmative in liberalism; while liberalism rejects much that is affirmative in democracy.

Secondly, democracy must be not only political but economic as well. It must be democracy on the job and in men's workaday lives. It must mean democracy in our corporate structures, so that ownership of them is open to the widest possible number of people, and control goes to that ownership rather than to a group of manipulating "insiders" or a few financiers operating a holding-company device. Ultimately such corporate democracy tends toward the corporate co-operative and the state corporation. It must mean democracy in our trade unions; for the only specific against racketeering, swivel-chair bureaucracy, and irresponsible leadership is a thoroughgoing rank-and-file democracy, linked with a strong movement for workers' education. It must mean the protection of the law applied to the basic liberties of labor organization, free from espionage by employers or suppression by local dictators or the brutality of vigilante groups and phony "Citizens' Committees."

Above all, it must mean freedom of economic opportunity, so that every child starting life will have at least a chance to show what is in him. With our concentration of economic power today, that chance has almost reached the vanishing-point. And yet the "American dream" was based on genuine freedom of economic opportunity. Unless we can assure that opportunity by a structure of economic security and by an adequate control of the mastodons of corporate power, we make something of a joke of our tradition of political liberties. For there can be no significant or lasting political democracy that is not based upon economic democracy. It is like wearing a good-looking glove on a diseased hand. It is like having a handsome and impressive architectural façade when behind it the walls are loose and the plaster crumbling.

Third, democracy means majority rule. It means the rule of the majority through a set of representatives chosen by direct election, with the appointive power restricted to the administrative officers and the judiciary—those whose expertness lies outside the broadest realm of policy-making and should be part of a careful investigation rather than of the clamor of a campaign. We accept majority rule, at least verbally, as a matter of course. And yet the fact is that many people who call themselves democrats (with a small “d”) are ready to fight majority rule to the very death. They feel there is something degrading, something mechanical and mathematical, about the fashioning of political destiny through a counting of heads. Yet it is the only method one can ultimately rely upon. If you try to stop short of it, there is no stopping-point this side of the rule of some *élite* and ultimately of a dictator.

I know the fear that people feel today for majorities—the fear that they will grow tyrannical and crush the rights of minorities. The relation of majority rule to minority rights raises some knotty problems in the No-Man’s Land where the two areas meet and blur—problems I shall consider in the next chapter. Yet one thing is clear: those problems can be tackled only after an initial acceptance of the general doctrine of the supremacy of the majority will. Majority rights must be restricted when the valid rights of the minority are endangered; but the same applies to the restriction of the rights of the minority. There has been a tendency recently to feel that civil liberties exist only for minority rights, that the great danger of abridging civil liberties comes from majorities, and that it is therefore necessary to abdicate the principle of majority rule. Yet we must remember that fascism is, on its accession to power, a minority movement. It was the armed and ruthless and financed minority in Italy and Germany that suppressed civil liberties, and only by suppressing civil liberties was it able to smash majority rule. The fact is that the Bill of Rights

does not consist of guarantees for minorities alone. They are guarantees for majorities as well, against any ruthless minority that may be using its position in industry to terrorize or impoverish the majority, or to prevent it from exerting its full power at the polls; or that may seize control of the governmental machinery to crush the majority.

Fourth, and following from the above, democracy means freedom for social change through the procedures of the majority will. It means also freedom for the majority to claim the benefits of such change. There can be no genuine liberty without the liberty of social and governmental change, no matter how drastic, through constitutional procedures. I am not arguing now for the right of revolution; for there can be no revolution in a democracy unless it is a democratic revolution—which is to say, no revolution at all in the accepted sense. The right of revolution as we have thus far understood it in political theory was drawn from revolutions by the majority against oppressive minority rule or against absolutisms. Such a right, as it applies today in the totalitarian regimes, I should reaffirm without qualification. It can scarcely be accomplished through constitutional procedures, for in such countries the constitution is itself totalitarian.

But a revolution in the sense of a shift of power through majority procedures—which may mean, in effect, the liberation of the majority from its fetters and a shift of the actual power from minority to majority groups—such a revolution is, in political terms, no revolution at all, whatever it may be in social terms. Such a revolution was accomplished temporarily by the Popular Front in Spain and France and by the Labour Party in Great Britain; in America we have had the “Jeffersonian Revolution,” the “Jacksonian Revolution,” the “Roosevelt Revolution.” The accession of a genuine Popular Front party to power in America on a program of socialized planning would constitute another such democratic shift in power. Given the



doctrine of majority rule, there can be no doubt of the consonance of such a shift in power with the theory of democracy. What is in doubt is the realistic question of what the capitalists would do if they were confronted by so immediate a threat to their minority power. But the consideration of that we must postpone. It falls in the realm of the dynamics of the crisis state.<sup>1</sup>

Fifth and finally, democracy means a sense of the dignity and responsibility of the common man, and of his capacity to fashion his own political destiny. It is, from this angle, a way of thought and of life. It is a genuine belief in the worth of human beings, a tolerance for their struggles toward expression, a sharing of their experience.

I happen to have been through a long and exaggerated course of training. I learned in various colleges and universities many things which, once I left them, it took me years to unlearn. I am thrown with people who have had more or less of a similar training. And in most of them I sense the attitude that we, of course—the select educated few—are fine and responsible people, and can be counted upon to govern ourselves; but not so the ignorant immigrants—the bohunks, kikes, wops, chinks, niggers. No, not they. They are material to be governed, but not to govern themselves, and least of all to have a hand in governing us. “Your People, Sir,” Alexander Hamilton once said, “is a great Beast.” He was no democrat. But our entire educational system inculcates that feeling into us. We cry out against the *élites* of the fascist countries. Yet we are unwilling to face the fact that there is no logical difference between our kind of chosen few and the *élite* that is measured not by education, property, nativism, and social status but by race and military caste.

I am not urging a view of basic psychological equality. Such a view is not necessary for a democratic theory. I once engaged

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VIII, sec. 1, “Violence and the Transfer of Power.”

in a public debate with a lady who insisted that my democratic position would compel me to swallow the whole of behaviorist psychology and identify myself with Pavlov's dog. No such thing. Democratic theory is not tied to any psychological system. One does not have to postulate the mind as a clear, neutral, and standardized slate on which social experience writes its record. One does not have to believe that human nature is "inherently" good, or that it is infinitely plastic material, capable of being molded at will. I happen myself to believe in the importance of individual hereditary differences. That makes me all the more anxious to remove the socially contrived obstacles that are placed in the path of the full expression of those differences. Human traits are what they are, neither wholly "good" nor wholly "bad," whatever those terms may mean in such a context. Democracy rests, however, on the proposition that the distribution of individual aptitudes does not follow the contours of class or property; that the common man has as fair a probability of inheriting the power to govern himself as the heir of one of the Sixty Families, or the son of the parson or professor. What must be removed is what brutalizes and degrades him: slums, poverty, undemourishment, lack of care and schooling, lack of economic opportunity. Give the common man access to these things, give him access to unpoisoned sources of information—and you will have a human base for your democratic structure.

If you mean democracy, you must face its implications, as I have tried to set them down. Nothing short of the fullness of those implications is worth our aiming at.

#### 4 . W H A T I S M I L I T A N T ?

A strategy without a philosophy is dangerous, but a philosophy without a strategy is powerless. I shall have occasion many

times in this book to call for a militant democratic tactic. But what is militancy when applied to a democracy?

It is not militarism or ruthlessness. Those who fear that the evoking of the energies of democratic government is meant to point the way to a totalitarian mood or the mass holocaust of war mistake its whole meaning. Democracy can learn nothing and borrow nothing from the political methods of fascism that it does not learn or borrow to its own disaster. It needs none of the trappings or symbol-structures of fascism, no transfusion from a fascist blood-donor. Its new energies must come from within, must be organic energies of its own. To be militant, democracy must be affirmative, unflinching, with a quiet confidence in itself and a determination to fear God and take its own part.

For, as Thomas Mann has pointed out, of the competing philosophies of government in the world today, it is democracy that is youthful. Despite the vaunted *gioinezza* of the fascists, dictatorship is an old political form. It is democracy that is new, and still relatively unexplored, for the great political inventions that are necessary to make collectivism and democracy jibe still remain to be made. It is democracy that is still experimental and precarious, challenging the daring of the adventurous and the young. And it is democracy in whose failure or success the high stakes are involved. For if a dictatorship succeeds, a new personal image—hero, conqueror, terrorist, fanatic—is imprinted on history. But if the democracies succeed, all men increase in social stature and are lifted to a more heroic plane, in a world of which they have become the architects and the artists.

Thus far the democracies have had a relatively easy time, with a margin for experiment in an expanding economic universe. Now with chaotic industries, idle capital, millions unemployed, the real test of democracy has come—now that it is not as easy to maintain civil liberties as under an agrarian economy,

or democratic forms as under early capitalism. Unless we expand industrial production and employment through socialization, and co-ordinate them through planning, we shall have to face complete economic collapse. And we fear collapse, because we have learned that the capitalists can so contrive things that the bird that rises from the ashes of our present order is not the phoenix of socialism but the vulture of fascism.

Hence the need for militant and energetic action. And yet the fatal tendency within the democracies is toward inaction. The reason is mainly that capitalism sabotages every impulse of democracy toward militancy; liberalism keens over it with monstrous lamentation.

By "militant" I mean a democracy that, to use a phrase from William James, has become tough-minded and not tender-minded. It must learn to recognize and know its enemies, understand their tactics, be willing to uncover those tactics and confront them.

I mean a democracy that, having willed the ends of socialization, is not afraid to will the means of collective democratic action to achieve them. The capitalist democracies of Europe are today dying of a creeping paralysis of will. But that paralysis lies not in the common man but in the capitalists, torn between lust for profits and fear of the fascists, and in the liberal leaders, terror-stricken and impaled on their own syllogisms.

I mean a democracy that, while calmly determined to give expression to the desires of its minorities, does not flinch from carrying out the decisions of majority rule.

I mean a democracy assured enough in its tolerance to be able to root out military fascist groups from its midst.

I mean a democracy willing to act decisively when decisive action is required, unmoved by the fear of increasing or concentrating governmental power, willing to use that power with swiftness and tenacity for social ends. Dictatorships have never resulted from the expansion of power in a democracy.

They have resulted only from its fragmentation, and the collapse it has produced.

I mean a democracy unflinching before the imperative of economic collectivism.

I mean a democracy strong enough to ride in the whirlwind and command the storm in the turbulent career of the crisis state, in the transition to a socialist economy.

Has democracy the strength to carry this out? Can it command the devotion of the young, upon whom the future of all states will depend?

The answer is that the strength of democracy came from the revolutionary experience of America, France, and England, and that it is being revived on the battlefields of the world today. A doctrine does not become a living force as long as it is taken for granted and no sacrifices have to be made for it. But under great tension and danger, it is welded to the traditions of the past and opens limitless possibilities for the future. The Spanish and Chinese resistance has done more to revitalize our own sense of the glory and danger of democracy than could a hundred tracts and a thousand patriotic societies.

But it is not only on the battlefield where blood is shed that this miracle is renewed. Actually every trade-union campaign, every legislative plan, every step in the mastery over industry, every administrative effort in the democracies today, is a battlefield. The lawyer-economist who studies the strategy of an industry and draws plans for its control, and who in America today has become the key figure in the transition to a democratic collectivism, is as much a hero as the soldier who may some day have to fight to defend the democratic order that is thus being built.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER FOUR

The anti-democratic oligarchy did not discard the democratic mask in the years after 1938. The war narrowed the gap between economic and political power, and the needs of national unity brought into control of the basic democratic machinery men in whose training and discipline democracy was irrelevant. The economic decisions with respect to the war were put in the hands of dollar-a-year men who were scarcely different from the pre-war capitalist oligarchy; and the basic military decisions in the hands of a group of professional military leaders who showed little responsiveness to the currents of popular opinion. Most serious of all, however, was the continued discrimination (despite pleas by both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie) against Negroes in the military forces, and against Negroes and Jews in the war industries.

There were many who hoped that the stress and strain of a war of annihilation might shake the complacency of those in control. But this was unlikely without active liberal prodding. That is why there are few ideas more fallacious than the idea that we must ease up on democratic self-criticism in wartime. The question of whether we mean democracy, or only mouth it, is even more important today than it was in 1938. A militant democracy today means one capable of fighting the war as part of the United Nations, and as part of the revolutionary social movements the world over. It means the ruthless intent to put the right men in the crucial administrative and war posts, regardless of whether they belong to the proper *élite*. It means contriving methods for pooling the wisdom and energy of leadership among the workers and technical groups as well as among ownership groups. Whether that could be accomplished in time to prevent the war from being protracted in length and even disastrous in outcome was in 1942 a question whose answer was dark and doubtful.

CHAPTER FIVE

**MAJORITIES AND  
MINORITIES**

1. *The Majority Principle*
2. *Pressures and Appeals*
3. *Civil Liberties for All*
4. *The Barons of Opinion*

## 1. THE MAJORITY PRINCIPLE

WHAT has happened to minorities in our generation makes many of us fear majorities. Probe deeply enough the mind of your cultivated dinner companion who has been to Harvard and calls himself a liberal: be he liberal or tory, like as not you will find that he fears the whims and passions of the "mob." That fear of his constitutes the greatest hurdle that stands today between intelligent men and democracy.

My own conviction that the majority in a state represents a good bet in the long pull of history does not proceed from any mystical faith that I share with Rousseau in the benignity or even the existence of a "general will." There is no abstract monster like a general will. Individuals are members of more or less shifting groups and more or less cohesive classes. As a worker, an individual may want prices high, so that wages may be high; as a consumer he will want them low. As a stock-broker he will be anti-liberal; as a Jew he will be anti-fascist. As a Catholic he will be torn between the treatment of his fellow-Catholics by the fascists and the fascist leanings of the Catholic hierarchy. There can be no majority will that holds for all public questions, and that always groups the same majority against the same minority. There can be only a majority principle, as a method of decision on issues of policy great or small. And when we speak of the tyranny of the majority, we mean presumably the tyranny of the majority principle in a democracy.

Actually, however, many of us mean more, for that would re-



duce our position to an absurdity. We mean one of two things. First, that despite shiftings and variations, the majority on all basic matters of social policy is roughly determined by the economic interest of the largest, which is to say the underlying propertyless, groups: which would mean that the dominant propertied groups would, in terms of their own interest, fear such a majority. Second, that whatever the degree of unity in the economic interests of the shifting majority, its social composition is generally such as to make it the stupid, cruel, gullible, corruptible, whimsical mass in a society.

One of these positions, sometimes a mixture of both, underlies the fear that most of the propertied and educated minority have of the masses. The first is the expression of a sort of unconscious Marxism that the propertied classes act on—a sense of class interest that justifies the Marxian position in the very act of opposing it. The second, nourished and encouraged by the first, is a projection of the fears and snobberies of an insecure *élite*, which has not the strength permanently to suppress the majority or the courage to educate it, and seeks, therefore, to hold its position by manipulating the political machinery and the ideas in a democracy, while deploring the whole process of seeking to influence the majority.

But this divided mind must, in the end, prove fatal to the purposes that the oligarchs seek. Part of their weakness in the game of majority politics is that they do not think in majority terms, except during campaigns. Hence their alternations between decrying demagoguery and attempting to use it. Hence too their yearning for the ultimate demagoguery of fascism, a demagoguery that returns its investment many times over, for once power is attained it need never be wooed again. Force becomes a sovereign substitute for it; and the majority principle is invoked only in fake plebiscites, as a ratification of *faits accomplis*. Lacking the strength for such a fascist coup, the propertied minority continues to function through the rhetoric

of democracy, but never for once sincerely accepting the majority principle.

We have heard so much of the sins of the demagogue, that a word in his defense would seem in order. The attack on the demagogue has been part of the anti-democratic techniques from the time of the Greek political philosophers. In fact one finds already in Plato's *Republic* the basic contradiction of the rule of an *élite*: the debasement of the people and the contempt for popular appeal, along with the contrivance of social myths to induce them to accept their governing class.

Demagoguery is simply the art of reaching the majority effectively. The great leaders in American history have been, for the most part, demagogues—that is to say, good artists in majority politics. Tom Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, Andy Jackson, Abe Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan, Teddy Roosevelt, Bob La Follette—all have been attacked as demagogues; and if historians have applied to them gentler epithets than their contemporaries among the wise and the rich, it is because the policies and doctrines they fought for have become an accepted or tolerated part of our lives. And actually they were demagogues, in the sense that they studied the art of reaching the majority, and were responsive to its moods and dreams. One can no more deplore demagoguery in a democratic state than one can deplore power in any form of state. They are the energies that make the political machine run. The problem in a democracy is to raise the level of demagoguery by enriching the experience of the people, just as the problem in any state is to make power responsible.

What we need is more good demagogues, like President Roosevelt and Mayor La Guardia and John L. Lewis, who know the minds of the majority and are willing to work within the rules of the game. The game provides that the victory goes to the side with the big battalions, but that you do not fight

with mercenaries. It is as necessary to have demagogues like the men I have mentioned, as it is to have aristagogues like Walter Lippmann or H. L. Mencken, talking for a real or presumed aristocracy of talent, or plutagogues like Hugh Johnson or George Sokolsky, talking more or less unabashedly for a plutocracy of corporate wealth. It is in the competition of such voices in rallying the big battalions that the democratic process lies. The danger comes not with such men, but with men like Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Gerald L. K. Smith, Frank Hague, and Gerald Winrod. What is dangerous about them is not that they strive to outdo each other in promises: the capacity to make promises persuasively is always a condition of gaining power, as the capacity to fulfill promises tolerably is a condition of staying in power. What is dangerous is that these men are mercenaries, as Hitler was a mercenary: they appeal to the people in vast terms of leveling the inequalities of wealth, but actually they are in the service of a plutocracy that seeks to entrench its wealth against the democratic threat.

The demagogue is not dangerous unless he has first sold himself to the élite of wealth that thinks to use him for its own purposes. The true demagogue loves the material he works with, the material of the mass mind, and he seeks always to raise the level of that material, as an artist seeks always to work in a denser and more difficult medium. The fake demagogue fears his art: he hates and despises the medium he works with; he solicits the extraneous aid of those with large and secret campaign funds; when he finds himself in a tight spot, he falls back on the steel and brutality of police or vigilantes or storm troopers. He uses the majority principle rhetorically and only as long as he has to; and when he has reached power he abandons that principle altogether, moving from the nightmare of democratic majorities to the more grotesque nightmare of revolutionary tension.

I know that many will not share my belief in the majority principle. A generation which has seen the world grow ever less gentle, and has seen freedom crumple like a child's body under an armored tank, may well ask what assurance we have that majorities will become intelligent and responsible, and that they will learn to discriminate between true and fake demagogues, between educators and debasers of the majority mind.

I can say only that the political job of our time must be the heroic effort of making our society as safe as possible for the majority principle. There will always be a margin of risk, too wide a margin, undoubtedly, for the mental comfort of the fearful who trust neither their own capacity nor that of their fellows. But it is a risk which, while we must do everything to reduce it to a minimum, we must be ultimately prepared to take. One who was so jealous of human liberties as Justice Holmes recognized the aleatory and the tragic in man's history, and gloried in it because of the zest it gave to individual and collective life.

The risk of the majority principle is the least dangerous, and the stakes the highest, of all forms of political organization. It is the risk least separable from the process of government itself. When you have made the commonwealth reasonably safe against raids by oligarchies or depredations by individual megalomaniacs; when you have provided the best mechanisms you can contrive for the succession to power, and have hedged both majorities and minorities about with constitutional safeguards of their own devising, then you have done all that the art of politics can ever do. For the rest, insurance against majority tyranny will depend on the health of your economic institutions, the wisdom of your educational processes, the whole ethos and vitality of your culture. If, with all that, the majorities within your culture still go berserk and destroy everything

of value that the collective life has built up, then scrap the art of government altogether and lock up your libraries. Fall back for comfort on a complete surrender to the anarchic drift of events or the lapped security of dictatorship. Fall back, for your thinking, on a cheap and easy explanation like the hand of God or of Fate, or some deep and inscrutable impulsions in human nature, or some dark death-urge at the core of civilization itself.

## 2 . P R E S S U R E S   A N D   A P P E A L S

It is a commonplace that democracy leads to what Walter Lippmann has called "a polity of pressure groups." Veterans' organizations, temperance unions, good government leagues, peace groups, war groups, trade associations, patriotic societies, trade unions, Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Mormons, utility structures, bar associations, medical associations, realtors, farmers' associations, women's clubs, consumers' groups, taxpayers' groups, teachers' associations, liberty leagues, leagues to save or uphold the constitution or both—a complete list of our pressure groups, organized and unorganized, would be as long, as specific, and as dull as a tariff schedule.

We have had a divided attitude toward pressure groups. We have never escaped the feeling that since they could succeed only through lobbying and organized threats, they constituted government by the buttonhole and the bludgeon. On the other hand, we have also felt that in a democracy not only must "the will of the people" be represented but the will somehow of every segment of the people as well; and since our liberal tradition has never allowed us to think of government as carrying out a clear line of direction, we have had to resort for our direction to a parallelogram of pressures. The result of this contradiction in our attitude may be seen summed up in

any speech before a good government league or a league of women voters: it will start with an attack on the wickedness of the utilities lobby or the labor lobby or the corruption of the courts by gangsters and politicians, proceed with a passionate plea for considering the welfare of the community as a whole, and end with an equally passionate exhortation to organize more cohesively as a group, and to write or wire your Congressman.

I consider pressure groups an unrelieved evil. I don't care much for lobbies; all too often they constitute one of those "invisible governments" that our political detective urge has always impelled us to seek. But I care almost as little for the good government lobby as I do for the utilities lobby or the tariff lobby. All pressure groups shiver the governmental structure into a thousand fragments in a world where only unified organisms can survive. They debase the polity by seeking to make of it the sum of the cancellation of its parts. When they are not wholly pecuniary, they are part of the pragmatic drive toward action for action's sake that strips our culture of meaning and direction. They premise no general understanding on the part of common man or *élite*. If they seek only their mercenary self-interest, they count on the apathy of the many; if they are advancing some cause, they have to reckon with that apathy. The apathy of the many, in the face of the enormous complexity of our economic and political structure, is the common premise of all pressure groups. With it as a given, they are able through their condensed urgencies to translate their minority interest into a psychic majority.

But that translation is always meretricious. The majority, whether in the electorate or in a legislative body, never accepts it with understanding and assent but only under duress of boredom or bewilderment. Yet I have no blame for the majority or its representatives. While pressure groups are an evil, they are, in a capitalist democracy, an inevitable evil. For there

is a basic contradiction between the capitalist part of our society and the democratic part. The democratic machinery of government is a continual threat to the propertied interests, and they must constitute themselves pressure groups to ward off that threat. It is natural that they should seek to prevent drastic government control, or to get their proper perquisites from government subsidies. The capitalists, on the other hand, always threaten through their enormous concentration of economic power to make the commonwealth a seignior of the big corporations; and various civic-minded and labor groups rise up in arms and storm the lobbies against them.

In this resort to group pressures on both sides, the contagion spreads; and groups like the Legion or the Townsendites, having caught the fever of thinking of government as a cornucopia of favors, organize successful raids on the public treasury by appealing, through the power of their voting bloc, to both sides at once. Only a strong administration, which has come to power on a large wave of majority sentiment and is sure of its direction, can fight the terrorism of pressure groups; and even then there will be compromises. Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration resisted heroically the hugest lobby of all, that of the power of the corporations. The President resisted the veterans' bloc in successive vetoes of the bonus bill, although, or perhaps because, his Congress did not. But neither the President nor Congress dared resist the powerful pressure of the Catholic Church on the question of lifting the Spanish embargo.

There has been a recent tendency in America to extend the pressure-group principle until it has become identical with the majority principle, or perhaps better, to convert the majority into a pressure group. Thus, when the various fake constitutional leagues, with enormous funds at their disposal, recruited a telegram crusade against the proposal to reorganize the national executive, Heywood Broun and others urged that

Congress be flooded with penny postcards. Actually, the postcards and letters from constituents who could not afford telegrams did finally come pouring in, making many of the Congressmen who had responded too eagerly to the telegrams ready to reconsider their vote.

Yet it is doubtful whether we should want the penny-postcard crusade to become a permanent technique. It conditions the legislature to respond only to pressures of what we call "public opinion." And at that sort of game the oligarchs have the cards stacked: they have the money, the press, the radio, the organizers, the single concentration of purpose. It is not hard for them, when they can concentrate all their fire on a specific issue, as they did on the Supreme Court and executive reorganization plans, to drum up a "psychic majority," which makes up in hysteria of feeling for what it lacks in numbers. The majority principle operates best not in *ad hoc* crusades but in polls, when the issue of general direction is presented, and when it is dramatized by candidates who stand for a general program.

Elections are, however, too widely spaced to meet the new pace of change and the urgency of the new issues. One of the important recent upcroppings has therefore been the cross-section straw poll, notably that of the American Institute of Public Opinion (the Gallup poll) and that of *Fortune*. These polls are at once enormously useful and subtly dangerous. They shorten the lag between majority opinion and our knowledge of it; they quicken the pace of the whole democratic process; they provide a stream-lining for the majority principle; by giving majorities a knowledge of their own existence they give democracy a renewed sense of its strength and an armor against the attacks of the pressure groups of the oligarchs. Thus, the attack on President Roosevelt during his second administration became more difficult as the cross-section polls revealed his undiminished popularity. It is not hard to



understand why the New York *Herald Tribune* stopped subscribing to the Gallup poll releases: it was embarrassing to damn an administration policy on the editorial page, and on another page of the same issue announce that public opinion was behind it. The cross-section poll has made the position of the editorial thunderers a difficult one.

But it places a greater responsibility on those who run it than should rest on any private agency. In the kinds of questions chosen, in their exact wording, in the timing of both the polls and the releases, and in the kind of sampling of opinion taken, there is a wide area left to the conscious or unconscious coloring of the managers of the poll. The cross-section poll will not become a safe agency of democracy until it has been set up as an autonomous research agency, independent of newspaper syndication and with left-wing as well as conservative opinion represented on its board of directors. Otherwise it may in time become in itself a pressure group of considerable weight.

The margin between pressure groups and what may be called "appeal groups" is real although not always clear. Trade unions, in so far as they operate through lobbies and other organized pressures, are pressure groups; yet the whole working population, organized and unorganized, is an appeal group. The same is true of the unemployed, of the WPA workers, of the farmers. Democracy can well dispense with pressure groups, and they will grow less effective as the government is more deeply rooted in the economic needs of the majority, and gets an ever clearer line of direction; but democracy cannot and should not dispense with appeal groups. The resort to appeal groups is a resort to their suffrage in time of elections; and, while the appeal will often be made in meretricious terms and with boundless promises, the effective appeals will be to the groups that are identified with the majority economic interests. The politi-

cal struggle of our generation will be fought out in terms of the broad appeal groups of the middle class, the farmers, the organized workers, the unorganized workers, the unemployed, and those on relief. The economic interests and the political emotions of these groups, far more than the traditional party ideologies, will shape the party alignments of the future.

It is when an appeal group is also a government subsidy group that thorny problems of tactic emerge. There can be little doubt that voters on the WPA and direct-relief rolls played a great part in Franklin D. Roosevelt's second election; and as I write they are playing a role in the Democratic primaries of 1938. In fact, the reactionaries in their blindness are helping to underscore the political effectiveness of this group. For, by their chauvinistic demands that no relief be given to alien residents in the United States, they are hastening the process of naturalization, that is to say, the process by which those dependent on the government for their pittance of livelihood become citizens and therefore effective voters. It is not hard for any incumbent administration that even grudgingly accepts the imperative of relief, to get the votes of this group.

Those who charge that this is being done through the corrupt influence of WPA officials exaggerate both the extent and the need of such influence. The WPA is politically important for the very reason that it is unnecessary to apply political pressure to those on its rolls. They constitute a natural appeal group; and the very fact that an administration is doing an effective job with relief and, even more important, with re-employment, is appeal enough. Where the large underlying population is involved, and where its plight is a function of our whole economic and social structure, to relieve that plight is not tainted with politics: it is politics, in its deepest sense. And a democratic collectivism, if we are ever to achieve or consolidate it, must make such politics the center of its being.

### 3. CIVIL LIBERTIES FOR ALL

But how far can this majority politics be driven; and at what point does it, through its infringement of minority rights, corrupt the liberty which must be the basis of any enduring state? No one knows outright the answer to these questions. It must be arrived at experimentally. Government cannot be wholly based on the utilitarian majority calculus; neither can it allow minority rights to defeat the purposes that a society has set for itself. Majority rule tends to grow imperialistically until it makes the culture totalitarian; but minority rights tend to be fetishized into minority rule. If the answer were known, politics would not be a perilous and challenging art, but a methodical science. Whatever answer men achieve for themselves on this central problem of human government is likely to be achieved only at the cost of blood and blundering and injustice.

Minority rights lend themselves readily as a screen for oligarchical rule. In America a Bill of Rights, embodying the experience of the Revolution and jammed into the constitution by the common people to guard against the aristocracy of wealth and the insolence of power, has become increasingly the shield of those who cling to the power of wealth against the power of a democracy. The increasing need for regulating corporate enterprise has dashed itself against the wall that the courts have erected around property, which cannot be taken without "due process of law." The liberty to which we have built the biggest and goldenest altar is "liberty of contract," which amounts in a capitalist context to the uninhibited liberty of exploiting labor. "Freedom of press," which once meant something, has become in essence freedom to fight union organization of newspaper employees. Civil liberties have come

to mean in actuality not a body of tradition to set the boundaries of arbitrary power but a pack of tricks to defeat the purposes of majority rule.

The fault does not lie in the idea of civil liberties as such. It lies in the social context in which the idea has been developed. In a capitalist democracy the law stands in a complex and contradictory relation to the minority of economic power. On the one hand the main body of the law, especially the court-made and court-applied law—the body of precedent and procedure to which we refer as “the rule of law”—is primarily a protection for property rights. To the extent that civil liberty is identified with this body of law it is a minority concept. On the other hand, law to the extent that it shifts in response to changing social needs is a majority instrument. Its safeguards, as for example the National Labor Relations Act, are safeguards for majorities or potential majorities as against the concentrated power of corporations either in the domain within their own factory walls or in the towns whose police and courts they control. Civil liberty in this sense—the right to organize and speak and vote and build new economic or party alignments—is a majority concept.

This is the sort of concept it was, in a transposed social context, early in American history, when civil liberties meant the majority's Bill of Rights and had to be fought for as such by the majority. It is our failure to understand realistically the importance of civil liberties for the majorities of today that leads us to think of it as a minority concept. Ours is an age in which the majority is fighting the power of corporate capitalism, is seeking to regain control of the democratic machinery for purposes of socialization, and is determined to do so only through democratic procedures. This sets the meaning of civil liberties for us—the guarantee of legal procedures for majority as well as minorities in this struggle.

Today in totalitarian states it is the minority groups who are

oppressed and who lack most the protection of a code of civil liberties. But in capitalist democracies the real oppressions are of those to whose aid the law, taking the shape of capitalist power in the community, is not anxious to come—labor organizers who are slugged and shot, Negroes who are lynched, sharecroppers who are flogged, teachers who are dismissed from their posts and preachers from their pulpits, liberals who are made the victims of red-hunts in their communities, radicals who are framed and deported, libertarians whose only sin is that they dare to challenge some local totalitarianism. These people and their sort are the people who fought for the civil liberties of the past. They are being denied the civil liberties of today. Their quarrel does not lie in determining the exact limits of the province of government. For them there exists only the brutality of extra-governmental terrorism. One has only to read any of the annual reports of the American Civil Liberties Union, or George Selde's fact-crammed handbook, *You Can't Do That*, for a fever chart of the violations of their liberties. The civil liberties of these people could be protected by a strong government. But they are not likely to be until that government has achieved economic order through an effective organization of the majority will, for vigilantism is an outgrowth of the basic unhealth of the political body.

We must, however, keep firmly in mind that the strength of a strong government raises problems of liberty which are not solved merely by additional increments of strength. To achieve economic order, legislative and executive supremacy is required, yet such supremacy must clearly allow for judicial guarantees and for an administrative expertise.

The judicial guarantee of liberty does not, however, necessarily involve the institution of judicial review of legislation. By making due process of law strictly a procedural instead of a substantive concept, it would be possible to extend to every-

one the protection of the courts without interfering with the province of the legislature and the executive. To make assurance doubly sure one could, in addition, adopt Justice Holmes's suggestion of abolishing altogether judicial review of acts of the national government, and leaving in effect judicial review of acts of the state governments. There are two reasons for making this distinction. First, the economic system has become an interstate entity. Hence the crucial legislation for economic order must follow national rather than state lines and should not be put in the straitjacket of judicial review. Secondly, the persistent infringements of civil liberties are likely to come from the states, where it is easier for corporate power to dominate the actions or omissions of legislatures and local peace officers. If these changes had been made, that of restoring due process to its old meaning and that of abolishing judicial review of national legislation, President Roosevelt would not have had to resort to the elaborate circumventions of his court reorganization plan.

The effect of this plan, if not its purpose, would have been to politicize the court—that is to say, make it responsive to the majority will. Objectively considered, there was nothing shocking about this except its indirection of method and phrasing. In itself it was one of the two major ways to solve the problem of the judicial power. One I have mentioned above—to restrict the power to its proper sphere, transforming it from the power of passing on social policy to the power of protecting individual rights within a given framework of social policy. The second was to leave the power unaffected, but subject the choice of judges to the political process. I should have thought the first to be decidedly the preferable. Yet it was the second that Mr. Roosevelt chose to try. Given the logic of that choice, the appointment of Mr. Justice Black, for all that it was whipped up into a *cause célèbre*, was a good one; for if you are to keep the judicial power but make it responsive to the majority will,

who would be fitter for the task than an able and fighting progressive Senator?

A cry was raised against both the court plan and the Black appointment—against a plan that presumably did away with judicial independence, and against the appointment of one who had not only years back been a Kluxer of record but was presumably still a Kluxer at heart. This cry premised the Supreme Court as the bulwark of civil liberties. But that is to claim too much for it. The record of the court on civil liberties, as any critical historian will attest, has been equivocal. On issues that strike at the fabric of capitalist power, or in times of great stress such as war, the court has proved as susceptible as any Congress to the prevailing hysterias. No, to regard the court or any governmental agency as the bulwark of civil liberties is to look into the wrong end of the telescope. Only the health of the economic organism can make civil liberties secure, and government agencies had best be viewed in relation to that health. From such a viewpoint the Supreme Court has much to answer for. It has, until the past few years, been a great anarchic force, making for social breakdown because it has blocked the basic legislation intended to regulate the economic system. In an orderly economy, where the tensions that generate infringements of civil liberties have been minimized, the court has a valid and indispensable function in making the Bill of Rights a reality in individual litigation and in enforcing procedural due process of law.

We may approach similarly the question of civil liberties and the executive. We inherit from England the tradition that liberty must be most jealously guarded against the executive power. Recently there has been a growing fear in America that a fascist dictatorship will emerge from presidential encroachment on the other branches of government. But such a fear is far less warranted than the fear that it will emerge from a breakdown of the executive power. As I have mentioned in an

earlier chapter, the soil of fascism is found in economic collapse, political paralysis, psychological hysteria. Political efficiency is a function of the relations among the branches of government, the existence of a clear majority in the legislature, the working of the party system, but above all the organization and morale of the executive. The executive reorganization plan was one step toward the avoidance of political paralysis. It was ironic that it should have been defeated by the cry of dictatorship. For the defeat was not a victory for civil liberties. It was a victory only for those who are fighting government control of industry and eventual socialization.

By all odds the sharpest spearpoint of democratic advance today is the administrative commission. Its intelligence and its morale may be decisive factors in determining whether we shall survive the transition toward a socialized economy. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that the reactionaries in America should have trained their heaviest guns on the administrative commissions, particularly such as the Labor Relations Board, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. They speak of them in terms that the British Roundheads must have reserved for the Star Chamber, or the Protestants and Jews in the fifteenth and later centuries for Torquemada and the Inquisition.

To judge them from any objective viewpoint, these commissions are in the main carrying out their prescribed function with caution and tolerance. They are accused of overstepping their administrative bounds and entering the area of the legislature and judiciary, thus subjecting the individual to the unchecked power of a small group of men. Yet the combination of executive, legislative, and judicial functions is exactly what makes them an effective new governmental form. They have investigatory and administrative tasks, in which they act in a quasi-judicial capacity; they have rule-making powers that have been delegated to them by Congress. Yet Congress may always



limit the delegation, as the courts can and do pass finally on the performance of the quasi-judicial functions. It is notable in this connection that the Labor Board, which has been most vigorously attacked for combining the posts of judge and prosecutor and for violating the freedom of speech and press of the employers, has been upheld by a tolerably liberal Supreme Court in an overwhelming proportion of its test cases.

The real danger to civil liberties in capitalist democracies in the calculable future does not arise from the extensions of governmental power: it arises from the broad No-Man's Land of industrial terrorism and fascist preparation where the government has thus far been powerless to penetrate. The big question for us to be watchful of is not so much "how far can the majority go?" although that must not be neglected. It is even more "how far will the minority go?" For in the transition toward socialization the oligarchs will not be inactive. As Seldes points out, adopting the jingo chant, "they have the men, they have the guns, they have the money, too." The great problem of civil liberties is whether freedom of speech and press and union organization and political action can be preserved for a majority that wants to use it to socialize the economic structure and to achieve a democratic humanism.

Our need today is the need of civil liberties not for a minority but for all. It is the need of an awakened consciousness that the great tradition of liberty is the tradition of an advancing majority fighting the absolute power of oligarchies, and creating in the process new safeguards for the human spirit. Those safeguards must apply to rich and poor alike, and no code of liberty can afford to make any exceptions on the score of wealth or social status. But in the very nature of the struggle for democratic control, it is the powerful economic minority that represents the great obstacle in the path of achieving that control. The problem of liberty is how to cope with that ob-

stacle without incurring the risk of arbitrary power and without corrupting the habit of tolerance. Whether that can be done depends on the self-discipline and the legal fiber of the democratic process itself. But it depends also on the exercise of self-discipline and respect for legality on the part of those who are fighting democratic advance.

Thus far the rich have been less concerned over vigilantism and terrorism than they have been to keep government regulation of corporate enterprise from functioning effectively. It will be interesting to see what their attitude toward civil liberties will be if a fascist movement ever gets a real toehold in America.

There are a few sporadic signs that such a toehold may be achieved. The activities of the German-American Bund, the rise of vigilante groups, and the antics of their "leaders" have raised sharply the problem of how far the doctrine of civil liberties can be stretched to apply to a group whose purpose is to wipe out all civil liberties. My own answer is unequivocal. We must extend even to the Nazis and the vigilantes all the traditional civil liberties. To do otherwise would be a mockery of the tradition. But the tradition is concerned only with propagating an idea through verbal persuasion and through organization. It does not extend to political uniforms and drill and semi-military organization. There is urgent need for federal legislation banning the latter. There can be no toleration, even in the libertarian tradition, for the setting up of a state within a state. The concept of a militant democracy does not include a suicide-urge as an imperative.

"But," my friends say, "it is you progressives, with your seeking to stream-line the liberal tradition, who are really bent on suicide. Do you not see that if Henry Ford is not protected against the Labor Board, the result is to corrode the habit of civil liberties; and the next victims will be not the Fords but yourselves? In your urgent haste to socialize our system, you are

using means which will ultimately be turned against your own ends, to their destruction." I follow the argument but I miss its application. There is a theory today of growing fashionableness that may be called the means-and-ends theory: that the liberals and reformers of the world are confronted not so much by an economic and political task as by an ethical crisis, that they must not at their soul's peril use means that are justified only by the ends sought. The statement of the problem puzzles me, although it has been argued with all his usual obsessive intensity by Aldous Huxley and brilliantly dramatized by Ignazio Silone's novels. It puzzles me because I should have thought that means were never justified by anything except ends; otherwise we should become victims of a mechanistic ethic more dogmatic than the most absolute dogmatisms of ends.

But, as I understand the civil-liberties argument of my friends, although it is often confused with the means-and-ends dilemma, it is quite distinct. It becomes a purely pragmatic question as to whether the means employed may not prove disastrously unsuited to the ends sought. And on that pragmatic question the answer is clear. We cannot accept at its face value the contention of the industrialists and their spokesmen that their civil liberties are threatened by the action of the administrative boards or Congressional committees of inquiry. If we do, then we open the floodgates to the sabotaging of administrative control of business; we give the corporations a providential framework of rhetoric within which to hide from the advance of socialization.

The liberals once believed implicitly in the triumph of the idea. Democratic humanists still believe in it. But they know that the triumph will be an empty one if postponed until our culture is only a memory in history books. And they know that the idea of civil liberties is more likely to triumph if its friends fight against the actual and pressing infringements of the civil liberties of the many, instead of weeping unduly over the

trumped-up infringements of the liberties of the few by a democratic government.

#### 4. THE BARONS OF OPINION

Perhaps the deepest sense in which the oligarchs hold onto power under democratic forms is through their control of the channels that feed the public mind. It is true that we are all—as workers, professionals, small businessmen, consumers—vassals in the far-reaching feudal structure of corporate power; but our deepest vassalage is to the seigniories of the intellectual and emotional realm. What we read, hear, and believe is enormously influenced by the oligarchs in their role as the barons of opinion.

It has long been part of the liberal tradition that a democracy cannot function except on the base of an educated electorate. Education has been one of the catchwords of commencement orators, the word reserved for the peroration when other and more direct roads toward the health of our social order have been considered and found dark and dangerous. Yet when the *élite* has spoken of education for the masses it has not meant, of course, the liberal-arts education and the knowledge of the social heritage that it reserves for itself. It has meant literacy. But literacy is only a tool—a tool whose product can be no better than the material it works with.

Literacy for the common people is a fine thing. But it is also a dangerous thing unless the common people can have some control over what is given them to read in the press and to hear over the radio. Literacy may only make the cattle ripe for slaughter. Some of the more literate of the American states were Ku Klux centers in the nineteen-twenties; and I shall miss my guess if the growth of fascism does not follow somewhat

the same pattern. There are no automatic mechanisms, with ideas any more than with food, by which the organism can select what is good and reject what is poisonous. The problem of mass education has gone beyond statistics on literacy and the work of Americanization classes; it has become a problem in political power and order, a problem in the control of the press and radio and cinema and school system.

Between those who stand for corporate capitalism and those who stand for democratic collectivism there is a mortal struggle going on today, a struggle for the minds and souls of the common people. The superiority of one way of organizing the economic system over another, the merits of democratic control as against oligarchical—these are important matters. But they must enter the consciousness of the vast majority before that majority can become an effective force to displace minority rule. And the ironic fact is that, for the present at least, it is the minority that is in control of the methods of influencing the majority mind. Capitalism can say in the words of Emerson's "Brahma": "When me they fly, I am the wings." Or to use a less mystical parallel, the situation is similar to that in Malraux's *Man's Fate*, where the Chinese revolutionists find that in order to overthrow the Nationalists, they must first storm their armories to equip themselves with weapons.

There are today two armories of such weapons. One has been stacked through the creation of social myths and symbols, the material out of which political opinion is shaped. The second consists in the controls that the oligarchs exercise over the channels of communication, the paths along which alone one can have access to the minds of the majority or, conversely, along which alone the common man can have access to the facts of society.

I use myth in the sense of a symbol-cluster—partly fabrication by ideologists and partly unconscious growth in the mass mind—which moves men strongly to action and passion. The

truth or falsehood of such a symbol-structure is irrelevant; what is alone important is its evocative power. Some myths are patently unscientific, such as that of "Aryan" racial purity and superiority; others, like that of the class struggle or of the British capacity to muddle through, are attested by the evidence of history. Every nationalism is a myth, yet since each premises the possession of all excellences by a particular national group, no more than one can be logically true and all are likely to be highly colored. The men who make the myths of a culture are by that fact the men who make its gods; they are the authors, teachers, preachers, editors, lawyers, orators, and more recently the publicity experts. Plato understood the essence of the social myth, as did Jesus; it was a fable, or parable, told to the people to cement their belief. And the men in the big New York advertising and publicity firms whose job it is to "sell" Big Business to the people, who coin slogans against trade-union organization and put together skeleton Citizens' Committees which use the middle class in smashing strikes—these men, without the poetic depth of Plato or the love that Jesus bore to the masses, nevertheless also understand the essence of a social myth. They care not who fashions the laws that govern men's actions, provided they are permitted to fashion the stereotypes that form the counters of their thinking.

To do their jobs effectively, the barons of opinion require a control over the channels of communication that tends always toward monopoly. In the case of the radio, this monopoly is subject to close government regulation, yet it is none the less achieved through a combination of technical and financial controls. In the case of universities and research organizations it is secured through endowment by the vested interests and through the tenacity of vested ideas. In the case of the press, which is naturally a congeries of small competitive units, it is secured through the large-scale enterprise of the chain news-

papers, the wire services, and the syndicates, and through the power that the advertisers and bankers exercise. But whatever the methods, there can be little doubt of the result: that the principal channels for influencing mass opinion in America have become virtually a class monopoly.

It is worth distinguishing this situation from the one that Germany, Italy, and Russia are in. A totalitarian press represents a hundred-percent monopoly; but it is a state monopoly. The press in America is, at the present writing and to judge from the way in which it reflects the anti-New Deal opinion of corporate capitalism, a seventy- to ninety-percent monopoly; but it is the monopoly of a class rather than of the state. The difference is important; for when the governmental machinery is in the control of the majority, as it is in America during one of the periodic democratic thrusts at power, the result is a pitting of the strength of the state against the strength of the barons of opinion, rather than the outright control exercised by a totalitarian state over a totalitarian press. It is significant, however, that President Roosevelt, in order to reach the people at all, had to lean heavily upon his weekly press conferences, upon a rapid succession of dramatic acts and statements that the press could not afford to ignore, and upon his "fireside chats," in which he talked to the majority over the head of the newspaper publishers. It is especially significant that he found it important to refer to the press distortions on every possible occasion, seeking thus to shake the faith that the common man still had in the authority of the press.

What has happened to the American press is clear disproof of the contention of the classic liberals that a capitalist press is a guarantee of democracy because it must give the people what they want. For generations the liberals have alternately inveighed against the press for lowering its standards to suit the popular taste and hugged it for being a democratic instrument responsive to its circulation. Actually, neither has been wholly

true. The "yellow press" has not stooped to the taste of the people; it has, on the whole, degraded and corrupted that taste. And it has done so deliberately to win and hold a body of readers who could be influenced politically. Nor has it proved true that newspapers have, as profit-making business enterprises, sought to maximize their circulation by adopting the most popular political line. If the Hearst papers had chosen to adopt an out-and-out New Deal position, the Hearst financial empire would not be in its present precarious state. One may hazard the suspicion that the Scripps-Howard papers have been willing to sacrifice some circulation to an ever more open anti-New Deal line. The fact is that newspaper publishing is as much a matter of power as it is of profits. It is not rare to find a press lord with a Northcliffe complex who hopes to make and break governments by the power of his headlines and editorials.

I am not saying that the profit motive has ceased to operate among newspaper publishers. The press is today a big business, corporate in structure, banker-controlled, responsive to the moods and interests of Big Business, basically anti-labor in its attitude, as befits a group of big employers. But because its stock-in-trade consists of myths and stereotypes, it is *par excellence* the class-conscious segment of Big Business. It is the part that speaks for the whole. And, speaking for the whole, it is fulfilling its power-function more completely when it is willing to push the reactionary position as far as the limits of tolerance of its readers will allow, even at the expense of some circulation. The risk is of course partly hedged by the fact that the big advertisers approve of such a course, and are themselves willing to forgo immediate business principles in order to reward it.

This tendency in the press has made the editorial page the one to which many readers devote their most intelligent neglect. To remedy this situation the syndicated columnist has been found useful. Starting at first as part of the revolt against



the anonymity, the pompousness, and the archaic views of the editorial page, the columnists have become the most important part of a newspaper, most eagerly turned to, most avidly read, most passionately discussed. What promised at the start to give them an enormous significance in denting the solid reactionary phalanx of the press was their vaunted independence of speech. Yet it was quixotic to think that the barons of opinion would tolerate such autonomous states within states. The way in which the Hearst chain has edited or omitted Walter Winchell's column, and the cavalier manner in which the Scripps-Howard general staff has shifted, omitted, and cut the columns of Heywood Broun and even of Westbrook Pegler and Hugh Johnson, as if they were strategic links in a military line, are proof that columnists' independence is by no means an absolute.

But even more dangerous to the columnist's future than these restraints by his boss is his own urge toward omniscience. The chances are that in most cases the ignorance of a columnist is not any greater than that of his fellow-newspapermen. It seems greater only because he feels constrained to deploy it over a broader terrain and to give his opinion on a variety of topics that would tax the resources of even a research organization.

The case of the radio differs from that of the press chiefly by reason of the dependence of the broadcasting corporations upon government licenses for their use of the air. This puts the corporations on their guard so long as there is a progressive government in power. Most of the radio's energy goes into amusement. Politics is treated as a puerile debating-society affair, with the exception of the presumably independent news commentators, who are sponsored by big commercial advertisers and whose reactionary influence on opinion exceeds even that of the columnists. Yet with all that, the radio is not yet playing in the political struggle the role it is likely to play dur-

ing our generation. The broadcasters are sparring until their position becomes less precarious. The movies too are devoting themselves mainly to recreation, but even in that capacity they are embedding the stereotypes of our capitalist culture in the minds of the American majority with a vividness and permanence that neither the press nor the radio can achieve.

The universities, dependent upon endowments and gifts from rich men, are passing through the agony of squaring this dependence with the ideals of the liberal tradition. While in most instances a university president and his businessmen directors will not risk the public censure of too flagrant a dismissal of an instructor for his views, their anxiety leads to a level of teaching and thinking that is thoroughly sterile. Eventually problems of freedom of teaching do not arise, since few teachers have anything to say that would require daring. But it is these mediocre factories that turn out the stereotypes which are retailed to the children of the masses through the public-school system. A recent development is the endowed research foundation, which has presumably developed because the universities are too busy teaching the truth to give any time to discovering it. But thus far the only function of the foundation seems to have been to throw the mantle of research over the naked shoulders of reaction.

Here then is the mechanism, tangled and complex yet somehow efficient, by which the barons of opinion seek to form and control the mind of the majority. There is a current story about a man who was standing at a bar drinking a glass of beer. Someone comes in and shouts: "O'Leary, your house is on fire." The man puts down his beer, dashes through the door, streaks up the street. He has run five or six blocks when suddenly he stops, struck by a thought. "Damn it all," he mutters to himself, "my name isn't O'Leary." That is a picture of the common man today. The barons of opinion blare through microphone and newspaper headlines, from pulpit and column: "O'Leary,

your house is on fire." And the common man grows hysterical and runs, even if his name is not O'Leary, even if it is not his house that is on fire, even if it is not his interests that are at stake. The problem that the leaders of the majority face is to immunize their followers against becoming the butt of this vast joke, prevent them from serving as the pawns of the minority, teach them that their name isn't O'Leary.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER FIVE

Some of my critics have held up my views on majorities and minorities as an object lesson in a too crude majoritarianism (see R. M. MacIver, *Leviathan and the People*, C. J. Friedrich, *The New Belief in the Common Man*, and Willmoore Kendall, *John Locke and Majority Rule*). I am aware that majorities often make mistakes, but that does not affect the basic thesis of this chapter. My belief in the unrestrained majority principle goes only so far as my belief in unrestrained governmental power, a belief with definite limits. I believe in the rule of law, in the sense that the leaders of the state must act within and not outside the framework of the law. I believe in the guarantees of political opposition and of the competition of ideas. But I see these as restrictions not on majority power but on state power.

Thus minority rights, *qua* minority rights, do not form a valuable political concept. Civil liberties do. But the experience of England and of America during the Second World War indicates that the value of civil liberties lies in protecting the individual integrity, whether the individual is part of a minority or a majority, in achieving a competition of ideas, in insuring a free flow of criticism directed at keeping the ruling administration alert and efficient. To speak of these as social

values is one thing, to enshrine them as "minority rights" is to miss their meaning.

I stress this because my driving impulse throughout this chapter has been to fight the principle of fragmentation and atomism which has been a disease of our time in politics, education, ethics, and which has played into the hands of the political adventurers. American fascist theorists like Lawrence Dennis are avid so to define democracy that by definition it is too fragmentized to survive. They have wanted it to be thought of as a huddling of swine around the trough. We should be wary lest we fall into their trap. Pressure groups are inevitable in a system seeking to humanize such discordant strains as the capitalist oligarchic principle and the democratic majority principle. I know that as long as this split lasts, liberty will be interpreted in terms of minority rights, and the barons of opinion will function as the guardians of minority power. I believe that the split can finally be resolved only by organizing the democratic majority effectively, with access to information, a stake in maximum production, and a sense of common adventure and cultural greatness.

I have said in this chapter that the accession of the majority to power through legal means is not in political terms a revolution. For this Edwin Mims, Jr. takes me to task in his able book, *The Majority of the People*. I have no objections to calling it by that name except those of precision of concept. In the social sense it is, of course, a revolution—as was true in Jefferson's day and Jackson's—a change in the basis of power. But "revolution" in the political sense implies a break in the fabric of legality, as in the American, French, and Russian Revolutions. And the future of majoritarianism does not necessarily imply such a break.

CHAPTER SIX

**PLANNING AS AN  
IMPERATIVE**

1. *The Nature and Limits of Planning*
2. *On Organic Growth*
3. *Unplanned Capitalism: a Sick-Bed Conference*
4. *Brink-of-War Collectivism*
5. *Can Capitalist Democracy Plan?*
6. *Agenda for a Democratic Collectivism*

## 1. THE NATURE AND LIMITS OF PLANNING

TEACH a parrot to say "supply and demand"—so an academic witticism went a generation ago—and he will be a classical economist. We might add today: teach him to call "plan, plan" and he will be a collectivist. Every world-view has its slogans and its sloganeers, as well as its expositors and critics. And the slogan of latter-day collectivism has become "planning." In itself, as a slogan or even as an attitude to life, it would be idle to discuss its merits. Lionel Robbins says there is planning, in the sense of deliberate choice, in every act of an entrepreneur in free-market economy. That is to stretch all meaning out of the term. I have heard passionate arguments, reaching far into the night, about the value of the planful existence as against the spontaneous and day-to-day. For myself, with respect to the conduct of my own life, I should hate having to choose between the two. There is room and to spare for both.

It is not, therefore, as a matter of absolutist philosophical credo that I am today on the side of a planned economy. It is because it has become clear that the unplanned economy, under modern technological and political conditions, leads to breakdown; and that a rationally controlled economy, through an effort of the collective will, can furnish economic order and relative plenty. As a matter of sheer social survival, collectivism has become an imperative. An ever-growing group in our generation is willing to translate planning from a slogan into a pro-

gram, to think out its meaning and methods, to work to achieve it, and, if need be, fight to defend it. For they see in it the necessary condition for establishing the sort of economic stability and cultural security within the framework of which the individual can be spontaneous to his heart's extreme bent.

There are two basic phases of an economy. One has to do with the ownership of the capital and the distribution of the income—the question of who owns what and who gets what. The other has to do with the running of the economy, the making of the decisions and their articulation—the question of who decides what. The first is a problem primarily in social justice and equality and in class division. The second is a problem in efficiency and power.

It is the first that has until recently formed the emotional burden of socialism, both utopian and scientific. For in the earlier stages, before unplanned capitalism had revealed its full anarchic confusion, socialism was concerned chiefly with the inequalities of income distribution and the injustices of labor exploitation. "Scientific" socialism meant the scientific study of the laws of historical development and of the capitalist mechanism. Later, under the influence of the Bolsheviks, it came also to mean the scientific study of the tactic of revolution. But today increasingly the emphasis of socialist thought has shifted to the scientific planning of the economic system. It has not left behind the older problems of social justice and equality; but its approach to them has come to be through the role of the community in making and articulating the basic economic decisions on which the welfare of the community rests. In this emphasis socialist thought has merged with non-socialist progressive thought, not on the emotional basis of a common sympathy with the underdog—which has never proved better than a transient affair—but on the more enduring basis of a common adventure in the planning of an economy.

This basis makes possible an alliance of socialists with left-wing progressives who have had an antipathy for what they considered the sentimentalism and absolutism of the Marxians; with trade-union leaders whose drive is not the concept of the class struggle but an adequate standard of living for the workers; with professionals and technicians who can identify themselves with an effort to give social meaning to technological advance and establish a basic social security; and with intellectuals who care about the richness of the culture that can be built on a stable economic base. Democratic planning forms the common denominator of the striving of all these groups.

Democratic planning may be defined as the technical co-ordination, by disinterested experts, of consumption, production, investment, trade, and income distribution in accordance with social objectives set by bodies representative of the majority. Where this is accomplished along with the transfer to the state of the ownership of the basic sources of wealth, it is socialist planning. Where it is still carried on within a framework of private ownership in these sources of wealth, it is planning by capitalist democracies. The Soviet Union embodies today the only form of socialist planning that we have—although it leaves much to be desired on the score of democracy. The crisis states, whose trials I shall discuss in the next chapter, are engaged in the incipient stages of capitalist collectivism which has not yet become capitalist democratic planning.

For a long time the liberal world called the socialist planning of the Soviet Union an "experiment." In economic terms that experiment has amply proved itself. Today it is capitalist planning that is an experiment. The thoroughgoing socialist, while he will help his allies in their struggle to make the crisis state succeed, since it means the avoidance and defeat of fascism, regards its success as at best transitional. For capitalist planning is an unstable form, just as capitalist democracy is itself



an unstable form. Democracy, as I have analysed it in the last two chapters, is an uneasy companion for capitalism; so too planning may prove to be. The attempt to make the economic system socially efficient and rational, once the basic decisions have been put into the hands of the community, leaves little social function for the continuance of private ownership.

Whatever the outcome, however, the nature of planning must be clearly seen. Planning is not in itself socialism or capitalism or fascism. It is collectivism applied to the major processes of the economic system. It is more or less complete and comprehensive as more or fewer of the major processes are included in its scope. At one end of the scale, in its most complete form, planning will involve the establishment and operation by the state of various forms of social insurance and the social services; the collective determination of price, production, and consumption policies; monetary, foreign exchange, and foreign trade control; state control of the mechanics of banking, credit, and investment; socialized ownership of the basic industries; collective operation of the large farms; and the assumption by the state of supervision over the introduction of new industries and new technological processes into the economic system. This is essentially the picture in the Soviet Union. In its least comprehensive and most truncated form—but still extensive enough to deserve after a fashion the name of planning—it involves the social services and social security, state control of phases of price, production, and consumption policy; supervision of labor and wage policies; and control of phases of banking, credit, investment, money, foreign exchange, and foreign trade. This is essentially the picture in Germany.

A word on the limits of planning. To approve of planning as a mechanism is in no sense necessarily to approve of the nature of the control or the ends to which it is directed. One may regard the planning mechanisms in the Soviet Union as

impressively efficient, and approve of the uses to which it has been put in raising the mass standard of living and heightening the pace of industrialism; and at the same time disapprove of the single-party controls under which it operates. One may regard the planning phases of the German economy as the most enduring characteristics of the Nazi system; and at the same time not only disapprove of the totalitarian dictatorship that directs them, but also of the diversion of the increase in the national income to the capitalists, the party leaders, and the war machine rather than to a higher living standard for the masses. Planning is a group of organizational patterns and technical skills—a technology; like all technologies, it is politically neutral. The goal of a militant democracy will be to put it in a framework of democratic control, higher living standards, and cultural enrichment. But those qualities do not come with or from the plan itself; they come from the traditions, objectives, and human material of the culture.

Nor should the adequacy of a planned economy be judged by the number of basic economic processes that are included in it. It is quite conceivable that the Soviet plan might have excluded the collectivization of the farms and still been as efficient. It could have excluded also the petty trades, many of the consumers' goods industries, and much of the marketing machinery, resorting to regulation rather than state ownership, without a loss of efficiency. In Germany the state controls at once too much and too little: too much because the intrusion of the state into the professions, the chain and department stores, the retail trades, was dictated by doctrinal and political rather than by economic considerations, as were also the destruction of the trade unions and the displacement of women from the economic system; too little because the lack of will or ability on the part of the state to challenge the great banks and the heavy industries leads to the diversion of national income from the masses. The essence of an effective

planned economy lies in the selection of the strategic points in the economic system for socialization and control. And "strategic" must be defined here as the points at which the gearing and articulation of the economic mechanism can best be accomplished, and the potentially dangerous concentrations of wealth can best be eliminated.

Which is to say that a plan must have the elements of great engineering or great art: to accomplish the purpose desired with the maximum economy of material and effort.

## 2. ORGANIC GROWTH

But on this principle of economy of effort, you may say, why have planning at all? Are not the most economical forms in the world the organic forms? And is there anything that man can do, with all the clumsy contrivances he calls his arts, that Nature cannot do with a perfection unattainable by him?

The argument has merit if you like the kind of argument that falls back ultimately on a mystical belief in Nature and on a conviction that Nature is on your side. But what weakens it, even in these terms, is the assumption that there is something about an unplanned capitalism, or something about unemployment and depression and poverty, that is "natural." The apologists of capitalist individualism have always appropriated Nature thus, claiming for their system the "divine hand" that guided individual selfishnesses toward a social good, and claiming it even in the centuries that no longer held to the eighteenth-century belief in Nature's Simple Plan. Actually an unplanned economy is as much a human contrivance and has as little relation to Nature as a planned one.

There is, however, something to be said for an argument somewhat similar to the above, but much subtler. Such an argument sees the hand of Nature not in one system of economic organization as against others, but in the slow evolutionary processes of history. The argument has never been stated more fairly than by John Stuart Mill in the brilliant first chapter of his *Representative Government*, where he contrasts the conception of political change as one of slow, traditional, organic growth, accompanied by the minimum intervention of deliberate shaping by men, with the conception of the organized and collective effort of men in fashioning their own social destinies. The first is Burke: the second Marx and Comte; the first, traditionalism: the second, socialism and positivism. And it is possible, in terms of the first, to defend capitalism not as in itself a "natural" system, but as a deep-rooted growth which has the capacity for revival, but which must be allowed to follow the laws of growth rather than suffer drastic dislocation.

This argument, too, is difficult to grapple with, for it rests on a metaphor. My own inclination, I shall confess, is toward the organic rather than the contrived, in society as in art. But the organic society can too easily be identified with the *status quo*. I believe there is as much organic institutional growth in the collective action of men to change their society, if their action is rooted in social possibility, as in their inaction and their surrender to drift.

Today the social cost of the continuance of anarchic production has become intolerable: in terms of waste and inefficiency, in terms of hunger, in terms of the indignity of a man's being useless in the world, in terms of precipitous inequalities, in terms of the dangerous concentration of power within a state, in terms of sheer breakdown. Unplanned capitalism seems to have reached the limits of its successive transforma-

tions and regenerations. It is no longer an expanding system. It no longer delivers the goods. It cannot keep the national income from dropping in a terrifying secular descent. Judged in terms of its own standards of Taylorism, it is a failure. Its own technologies have helped create a world which has grown too unwieldy, as its own anarchy has helped create a world that has grown too tense and conflict-ridden to be reorganized in terms of the blind application of individuals to their own profit-sheets. It must either give way to rational planning, or it must in its desperation turn to fascism—a form of planning-to-avoid-planning, capitalism stripped of its individualism but left with its greed and ruthlessness—and even in that form destined to ultimate breakdown.

“But,” argues the evolutionist, “when I speak of organic growth, I am allowing for change, and even for the gradual introduction of the planning principle.” And he points to the way in which the capitalist democracies have been able to absorb parts of the socialist program, even some of the demands in the *Communist Manifesto*, and to the steadily enlarging province of government in business. This enlarging scope of government is now widely recognized. Even *laissez-faire* economists acknowledge it—in fact, it forms the burden of their jeremiads. And it is terribly important, for it establishes that to no small degree collectivism is a fact in the world today and no longer a theorem for speculative debate. It indicates also a greater resilience on the part of capitalism than many of its opponents would concede it.

The contention must, however, be treated with some skepticism. Not all forms of economic collectivism fall into the category of planning. There is not an economy in the world today that does not embody at least the marginal features of collectivism—some of the social securities, let us say, or some form of government regulation of business. Yet regulation dif-

fers from decisive control, and the social services from the crucial industrial processes. I have not the space here to labor the obvious and to write a review of how governments have been gradually pushed to take over more regulatory functions. But it would scarcely be challenged that thus far in the capitalist democracies those new functions have represented either concessions by the capitalists in the direction of the social-service state, or regulatory mechanisms to make business itself safer, investment less precarious, and competition less predatory. They have only to a limited degree protected the worker or the consumer against the power of the corporation. But, most important of all, they have scarcely more than touched the two basic phases of change in economic organization—the ownership of the capital, and the planned articulation of the major processes in the economic system. Nowhere in a capitalist democracy, not even in the United States or in the Scandinavian countries, where the trend toward socialization has gone farthest, has either the property base been substantially shifted or mechanisms been established for socially determining and coordinating price, production, consumption, trade, and investment policies. Nowhere, in short, has organic capitalist growth yet emerged in a planned economy.

A class which has made even the concessions of the social services and trade-union organization stubbornly and only after enormous resistance is unlikely to yield its power on the more basic issues by the same methods of slow absorption. England, Seeley once said, conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind. Possibly, by the same sort of psychic intermittence, capitalism has grown social-minded. But it would be exacting too much of history and politics to ask them to yield evidence that at some time in the calculable future capitalism would find itself possessed of a planned economy in a burst of magnificent inattention.

### 3. UNPLANNED CAPITALISM: A SICK-BED CONFERENCE

This is not to throw away the pulmotor. It is not to dismiss arbitrarily the possibility that capitalism may have the capacity for revival. The socialist economists deny it, as they deny also that capitalism can plan. But the latter contention is a subject for another section of this chapter. Here we are concerned with capitalism's capacity for revival by measures which fall somewhat short of planning as I have defined it. I should like to divide into three schools the economic theorists who feel that capitalism has this recuperative strength. I shall take the liberty of calling them by names of my own choosing: the liberal school, the regulatory school, and the leverage school.

The liberals, who represent the orthodoxy of the classical tradition in economics, hold that the only path to stability is the path of economic freedom. What is wrong with capitalism, they say, adapting Shaw on Christianity, is that it has never been tried. Capitalism has never wholly shaken loose from the feudal, guild, and mercantilist controls from which it emerged; and increasingly during the past century new shackles have been placed upon it. Internal restraints on production, external restraints on trade, the dislocatory effects of nationalisms and wars—how can a system premised on economic freedom do anything except break down under such conditions? Remove the interferences, restore to the businessman the confidence and *élan* which represent the motive power of capitalism, above all restore the world to some semblance of order—and capitalism can be revived.

The liberals have the most cosmopolitan outlook of all economic schools. There is a world-view instead of a national view of the framework of economic activity. They think in terms of what Lancelot Hogben calls "natural sites" rather than po-

litical boundaries. They talk in terms of "pure" economic considerations, seeking to disengage economic fundamentals from the opportunism of politics and the luxury of sociology and ethics. They depart thus from Adam Smith's attempt to join economics and politics in a single science of Political Economy. Their tendency to regard politics as a species of opportunism sets them, to start with, against any government regulation of business except such as will permit it to achieve a freer functioning. In this category they allow for government encouragement of smaller business units, on the ground and only to the extent that they are more efficient than the unwieldy trusts and approximate more closely to the original competitive ideal of capitalism. In this category also they allow for regulation of utilities and other natural monopolies in the public interest, but without socialization of them; and for some social services and social legislation, but only to the degree that they do not impose an added burden on industry, and that higher wages, lower hours, and trade-union strength do not hamper production. This school places its dependence on the natural self-healing qualities of a free capitalism; on the exercise of self-restraint, self-government, and flexibility on the part of the capitalists; and on the generation, in accordance with capitalism's own laws, of some new industry or boom whose energy will set the whole mechanism to functioning again.

The regulatory economists of the second school have discarded the concept of a freely functioning system with its own natural laws that must not be touched by human hands. They are collectivists. They are willing to use whatever government power is necessary to get capitalism to function, and they call the use of that power not government "encroachment" or "interference" or "intervention" but "control." Nevertheless, they act on the proposition that, with firm and careful regulation, capitalism can revive its strength, increase the national income,



and achieve a smooth functioning. While they are willing to go as far as the logic of regulation will carry them, piling rules on rules, they are not willing to violate that logic by shifting from regulation to socialization or comprehensive planning. For not only do they recognize the resistance such a shift would evoke from the capitalists, but they fear that a transfer of the basic economic decisions to the government would wholly strip the system of its motive power. Nor are they willing to go the whole way in finding a new and collectivist motive power. They are thus collectivists only so long as they can be partial collectivists, and so long as collectivism does not lead to socialization or planning.

But they pride themselves on being realists. They are unwilling to build their thinking on the premise of a world in which order has been restored. They take the world as it is, with its wars, tariffs, and nationalisms. Their critique of the free-trade position is devastating, and they adopt a position that tends frankly toward economic nationalism and self-sufficiency—what Charles Beard has called “the Open Door at home.” They are willing to go a long way toward tariff control and control of foreign exchange. But their emphasis is on price and production policy, where they advocate government regulation to lower prices on an increased volume of production. They are aware of corporate power and its concentration, but they are not trust-busters in the old sense: their concern is not to restore an earlier competitive paradise, but to keep prices and production flexible as public policy demands it. They are willing to leave the wealth and size of the corporation untouched if only they can be certain that the machinery will start again and keep going. To help it in this direction they are advocates of extensive public works and huge “priming” expenditures by the government.

The “leverage” economists of the third school have not as yet become as articulate as those of the other schools. Their

thinking is a strange mixture, running against the main currents in some respects, and yet they express the capitalist spirit in a purer and more positive form than the others. They tend to regard the liberal orthodox economists as mossbacks, and the regulatory economists as flirting with socialism and left-wing labor groups and not fundamentally capitalist. They believe that the capitalist democracies have already gone too far both in establishing the social services and in the minutiae of regulation of business; that these have sapped individual initiative and thus the capitalist spirit. They agree on the need for economic nationalism and self-sufficiency and are fiercely isolationist. But what they purpose, instead of an overall regulatory structure, is a thorough nationalization of the banking, credit, and investment mechanisms, and the use of these along with monetary control and public works as a leverage for giving business its direction, leaving it pretty much alone after that.

The liberal economists are more important at present for the fierceness of their attack on regulated economies than for any positive program of their own. Such of their spokesmen as Lionel Robbins and Friedrich von Hayek in London, and in America the University of Chicago and the Harvard groups, have the heady sense of fighting against the unjust gods of today's opinions. Being in the opposition, they attack with vigor and sharpness. Their great weakness is that they are looking backward and defending the lost causes of yesterday. Their revived capitalism premises a simpler world than ours—a world in which order has been restored; but this is to engage in a species of question-begging, for how to restore order is exactly the problem involved. They start with beautifully lucid theorems, and arrive at beautifully proved conclusions; but it is all carried on in a vacuum so far as the actual world is concerned. The voyage of the liberal mind takes place, as in Coleridge's poem, in a painted ship upon a painted ocean.

The regulatory economists, who are really collectivists without the courage of socialist convictions, are not so much a school but a whole set of schools, as I shall show later in this chapter. Thorstein Veblen in America and John A. Hobson in England fathered them. The group of economists attached to the New Deal are today developing the practical implications of their position. In their stress on national self-sufficiency and the importance of public-works programs they derive from J. M. Keynes. They represent the main trend of economic thought today; nevertheless, under the fierce attack from the Right in press and academy they are on the defensive. Their great weakness is that they must defend capitalism and attack the capitalists, excoriate planlessness yet stay shy of planning. From the people themselves they have evoked considerable enthusiasm, and have succeeded in popularizing the over-investment theory of depression, the purchasing-power theory of regulatory legislation toward revival, and the theory of the insiders' control of the corporations and the role of the corporations in semi-monopolistic price determination. But what enthusiasm the common man feels for them is a puzzled one.

So also is his attitude toward the credit-control school, stemming partly from Keynes and inspired by the example of Schacht, with the La Follette National Progressive Party in America as its most recent proponent. The ordinary man is likely to be attracted by the relative simplicity of the proposal, yet he cannot understand how capitalism is to be at once freer than it now is and also more decisively guided.

All these schools agree on one thing: that there are no inherent laws in capitalism governing its own decay and collapse; that it is all a matter of how well it is regulated or left free of regulation; that once we understand the favorable conditions for its operation, capitalism can be revived; and that it can be revived without drastic socialization and without taking the basic economic decisions out of the hands of the capitalists.

#### 4 . B R I N K - O F - W A R C O L L E C T I V I S M

They have, however, not made out their case. The capitalist world is now entering the second decade of the greatest depression in its history. The best that can be said for it is that the major western capitalist industrialisms, with the exception of Germany, have not yet collapsed or gone fascist under the strain, and that while there are two crucial wars in progress they have not yet become fused in a general conflagration. The efforts at the revival of capitalism are being made not only in the democracies but in the fascist countries as well. That they have thus far succeeded at all is due to two major factors.

First, although the capitalist nations of the world are not officially at war, they have had to place themselves economically on a war footing. This applies to Germany, Italy, Japan, Great Britain, and France. While it does not apply with equal force to America, which can afford to make its necessary government expenditures on non-warlike projects, it is still true that we have stepped up our armament budget to over a billion dollars a year. The other powers are devoting a sickeningly enormous proportion of their national income to armaments—more than to anything else. This is partly because the logic of fascist necessity on the one hand, and the threats of fascist power on the other, compel them to do so. But it is partly also because a country on a war footing tends always in economic terms toward the socialist or state capitalist, as it tends always in political terms toward the fascist or totalitarian. This war collectivism enables a nation to put its unemployed to work, either in the war services or the war industries. It also enables the ruling groups to retain under the protection of the war psychology the allegiance of the masses. The ruling groups, however, prefer to keep the country on the brink of war rather

than to precipitate it into a war. They prefer to keep a monopoly of the arms, rather than distribute them. For it is easier to retain the allegiance of an unarmed than of an armed people.

This war collectivism, or better, this brink-of-war collectivism, is not a method used by dictatorships alone. It is being used today by France and notably by Great Britain. Without the enormous expenditures for planes, battleships, submarines, destroyers, guns, uniforms, gas-masks, British industry would be in a much worse mess than it is today. The need for brink-of-war collectivism is not, as Walter Lippmann for example contends, a disease of the dictatorships. It is a disease of unplanned capitalism.

The second factor enabling capitalism to hold body and soul (so to speak) together is enormous government spending on non-war projects. Public works, relief, work-relief, and farm subsidies are the largest items. The effect of this spending is that capitalism, lacking customers with purchasing-capacity for its products, gets a huge customer in the form of the government to fill in the gap. This customer acts by proxy, doling out dribbles of purchasing-power to millions who would otherwise under an unplanned capitalism have none. It gets the purchasing-power partly by transferring it through taxation from the relatively well-to-do—mainly, however, by taxing the future through the use of government credit.

One of the great differences between the fascist dictatorships and the capitalist democracies is that the dictatorships find it easier to tax, get forced "loans" that no one ever expects will be repaid, and maintain their credit through force and fraud—the force of arms and the jugglery and concealment of national finances. But whatever their methods, dictatorships and, especially, the democracies have to resort to these devices for government spending because they are afraid to plan. Spending is not planning. It is a form of outdoor relief to a sick and impoverished capitalism, the need growing ever greater as the

various members of the capitalist body are allowed to atrophy through disuse.

True, capitalism has always needed some such forms of external aid, but never so consistently or to such an extent. Subtract from any unplanned capitalism, whether dictatorship or democracy, these external aids of brink-of-war collectivism and government spending, and you are likely to find that the secular trend in capitalism proper is one of deterioration rather than improvement. The purchasing-power that has to be thrown in to fill the gap becomes ever greater. Even America, with its enormous resources and its national energies, found in the spring and fall of 1937 that it could not afford to let up on the amounts that the government was adding to the total purchasing-capacity; as soon as it let up, there was a sharp "recession"—that is to say, a depression within a permanent depression. It was not until the government had undertaken in the spring of 1938 to throw new billions into the breach that the careening downward curve was halted.

To return, then, to our earlier question. Can an unplanned capitalism revive? Despite the arguments, speculations, and hopes of the schools of economic doctors, the answer is thus far in the negative. We may, like the liberal school, talk of a freedom for capitalism that can no longer exist; for if it meant freedom from the ministrations of government, it would mean death. We may, like the regulatory school, try all kinds of government regulation; yet while it hems in the anarchic trend of an unplanned capitalism, it does not give it new strength of its own. We may, like the leverage school, talk of giving capitalism direction and then leaving it free; but whenever the direction we point out runs counter to the interests of the corporations, the freedom will have to be converted into regulation.

What is keeping capitalism alive today is only partly the role of government as regulator. In the case of the New Deal,

as an example, this role is helpful chiefly because the government puts a floor under wage reductions and labor exploitation, provides social services and a measure of social security against the anguish of unemployment, restrains the gentlemanly marauders of the stock market, keeps the monopolists and public utilities from exploiting their monopoly position to the full, and by banking control prevents recessions from becoming panics. Yet the function of a policeman must not be confused with the function of a doctor. What is chiefly keeping capitalism alive is the government's entering the picture as a huge purchaser, both of war and non-war materials and services, placing the country on a brink-of-war footing and instituting thereby a form of collectivism. To keep alive, capitalism has everywhere had to resort to a confused and half-hearted collectivism.

But it is not a planned collectivism. Whether capitalism can be revived by planning is, then, our next question.

## 5. CAN CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY PLAN?

The problem today is no longer the merits of collectivism as against those of individualist capitalism. Collectivism has been taken out of the arena of controversy. It is a fact—as much a fact under the unplanned capitalism of America as it is under the planned socialism of the Soviet Union. It is still, to be sure, a stereotype of no negligible importance in the capitalist democracies, and its horrors are vividly depicted by the barons of opinion in their campaign against further government control. It is also a target in the bloodless battle of the categories, when the economists entrenched behind their Maginot line in the academies take pot shots at the problem of “economic

calculation" under collectivism and declare the whole thing to be contrary to human nature. But every important country in the world is today a collectivism of a more or less mongrel breed. That is to say, in every important country the community through its government takes collective responsibility for unemployment and the social services, expends huge sums, to add to the purchasing-power of the population, and seeks to regulate the conditions under which the major economic processes are carried on. Collectivism exists in the form of either socialism, fascism, or the regulated capitalism of the democratic crisis state.

Our real question today has therefore become, what kind of collectivism? Will it be unplanned or planned, or will it hover in the mid-region between the two? Will it be capitalist or socialist? Will it be an economy of restriction or of abundance? And, finally, will it be democratically controlled, or under the dictatorship of a financial or military oligarchy or of a monolithic party? It would seem that there are enough decisions to make that revolve around real questions, without our getting bogged down on questions whose answers history has already written.

The collectivism we have today in America is an unplanned, highly regulated capitalism, in which the major economic decisions are made by a financial oligarchy, and the government regulations and subsidies are democratically controlled. Such a regulated capitalism does not constitute a planned economy. The major decisions within any one corporation are, of course, planned; and despite the commonly expressed contempt of our pragmatic thinkers for "blueprints," these decisions are even blueprinted with a degree of precision characteristic of a culture that gave "scientific management" to the world. The major decisions within any government bureau or administrative board are also planned. But there is little articulation of decisions within an industry, except in the case of monopolies,



or of the predatory agreements to keep prices high, wages low, production restricted, and trade unions out. There is no articulation of decisions between industries, on the part of either business or the government. There is no gearing of the major processes of consumption, production, investment, trade, monetary circulation, and income distribution. Nor is the American economy one of abundance. Besides the restrictions on production by the capitalists themselves, and by trade-union policy, the government has added further restrictions in the interests of stability in farming and other economic areas.

It is customary to speak of "New Deal economics" as if it were a unitary thing. Actually there is no more unity in its economic thought than there is in the hybrid unplanned collectivism which it seeks to rationalize, consolidate, or improve. The New Deal, at the present writing, contains economic positions that range all the way from tory or liberal orthodoxy, through Hamiltonian subsidy-interventionism, to left-wing Veblenian institutionalism.

The principal schools of New Deal economic policy may be grouped somewhat as follows. First, the free-trade liberal internationalism of Secretary of State Cordell Hull, aiming at lower tariffs and reciprocal trade agreements. Second, the economic nationalism and the trend toward planned regulation of the group around Secretary of Agriculture Wallace. Third, the economics of business self-government within a framework of decisive regulation, represented in the approach of the SEC toward the exchanges and holding-company structures. Fourth, the economics of large government expenditures, represented by the group around Secretary of the Interior Ickes and Relief Administrator Hopkins. Fifth, the economics of regulated competition among small business units, widely represented throughout the administration, and stemming originally from

the influence of Justice Brandeis and from western populism. Sixth, the economics of large-scale enterprise, kept under effective government control until ripe for socialization—a view equally widely distributed through the administration. Seventh, the economics of price and production flexibility through government regulation in some form. This policy is somewhat related to the low-price large-output creed of the Brookings Institute, but owes most to the thinking of Gardiner Means on the National Resources Board, Thurman Arnold and Walton Hamilton in the Department of Justice, Isador Lubin in the Department of Labor, Jerome Frank on the SEC, and Leon Henderson in the Relief Administration. It is the policy that is being adopted as a hypothesis to be tested by the Monopoly Inquiry which is, at the present writing, conducting an investigation of great potential importance. It is based on the premise that price and production policies are not set by the automatic mechanism of the market, but are the result of corporate decisions. It is basically pluralist in its approach, holding that each industry must be tackled as a separate problem in the economics of regulation and the politics of price determination. Eighth, the economics of monetary and credit control as a leverage for a regulated economy, represented by Lauchlin Currie and others in the group around Chairman Eccles of the Federal Reserve Board. Ninth, the “industrial expansion” economics, mapped out in Mordecai Ezekiel’s *\$2500 a Year* and partly embodied in the Industrial Expansion Bill introduced in 1937 by a group of House progressives. This comes closer to a real conception of inter-industry planning than anything else thus far advocated in the New Deal.

Clearly no government with such a range of theories, policies, and objectives, many of them working at cross-purposes, can be held to be engaged in planning. The New

Deal raises in a sharp form the question whether a capitalist democracy can ever successfully plan its economic life. There is little doubt that a fascist capitalism could plan, if it applied to the corporations even a measure of the ruthlessness that it applies to workers. Whether it would wish to is another matter. But can a democratic capitalism plan? Here is the New Deal, which has gone further in the direction of collectivism than even the so-called Labour government of Ramsay MacDonald or the Popular Front government of Léon Blum; and yet, after more than six years in power, it has not made up its mind as to the goal toward which it is traveling and the means by which it hopes to arrive.

Yet this must not be taken as a decisive answer. A government with the courage and imagination to experiment with various techniques of social control is a necessary stage in the movement toward a democratic collectivism. The New Deal has, for all its confusion, made enormous progress in the economic and political education of the majority. We may or may not avail ourselves of this progress in the calculable future, but it is there for us to use.

There is one condition under which a democratic capitalist collectivism could plan. That is if it had the courage to move in the direction of an expanded rather than a contracted national income, and the political firmness to meet corporate resistance on the question of gearing the major economic processes together, as Mr. Roosevelt has met that resistance on the corporate sabotage of his labor and utility policies. Such a capitalism would be a state capitalism. Private property and private industrial initiative would remain; but the capitalists could make their large decisions on policy only within a framework set by planning-boards. Within that framework there would be an area of free choice. Outside that framework there would be none, for outside that framework would lie the area of anti-social decisions.

## 6. AGENDA FOR A DEMOCRATIC COLLECTIVISM

I have no intention of offering in a few pages a plan for America, not to speak of one that would suit the general pattern of capitalist democracies. Such a plan must be the product of many minds, and must emerge out of an intimate and many-sided experience with the functioning of industry and government. It will be at least five or six years before a major political party in America will take the risk of putting its strength behind the advocacy of a plan, and at least a decade before a government is elected with the strength to attempt its execution. It may, however, be worth while to set down some notes on what a democratic planned collectivism in America should aim at, and some of the problems it will have to confront.

First, however, a few words on what it need not and will not be. A democratic planned collectivism does not mean a system of rationing, in which the state appropriates the product of industry and agriculture and rations it out in military fashion to the population. No system of planning, whether capitalist or socialist, is a rationing system except during a war or a civil conflict. And every system of planning involves a system of calculation, despite the insistence of Mises and other anti-planning theorists that only the automatic mechanisms of a "natural" system of capitalism can provide a method for calculating prices, profits, and wages.

Similarly, a democratic collectivism does not involve the abolition of private property or of profits; what is essential only is that both be geared to the social ends of the plan as a whole. It does not involve the leveling of income. Nor does it involve the standardization of consumption, or the coercion of the consumer on what he shall eat or wear or how amuse him-

self. It leaves untouched the basic principles of consumer choice, affecting not the range of products offered to the consumer, but only their relation to the economic process. In fact, consumption is of prime importance in a planned economy because one of the first principles of planning is the gearing of production to consumption through the calculation of consumer demand at a certain price. The products in which personal taste plays a great role would be left practically untouched by the planning process.

Finally, planning does not involve the whole of industry, but only the basic industries. Even of those, no intelligent plan will treat every industry alike; the administration of the plan with respect to any industry will hinge upon the character of that industry, its place in the economic mechanism, and the factors and methods that enter into the determination of its price.

It would seem scarcely necessary to guard against such obvious misconceptions, were they not as common as they are obvious. But all that is negative. In affirmative terms democratic planning in America would set as its first aim the expansion of the national income. It would explore the utmost limits of American productive capacity. The increase of the purchasing-power of the workers and the raising of their living standards are essential to any collectivist effort, if the economic system is to survive at all; and the New Deal must be commended for aiming at this through its labor legislation and its government expenditures. But this will turn out to be a tragic process unless it is accompanied by an increase in the total national income. For the reapportionment of a dwindling income among ever more urgent claimants must produce social tensions that end only in a futile violence. But if what is reapportioned is a growing national income, and on more equitable terms, then the process of redistribution becomes socially possible. It is worth noting that the peaceful period of the

capitalist state, when it was willing to make concessions in the form of social services and higher living standards to the workers, was the period of capitalist expansion.

The collective effort must aim to increase what there is to share, at the same time as it sets itself the task of sharing it more equitably. This is a principle that squares with the American emphasis on what Stuart Chase calls "the technological imperative." At a conservative estimate the present national income in America can be increased by a third in five years. It would probably not be too optimistic to say it could be doubled in a decade. Those are huge stakes to play for. Unless those who desire rational social planning make an increase in the national income an integral part of their program, its full emotional force will be left for others to exploit.

How could such an expansion be accomplished? Roughly, by selecting the twenty or thirty basic industries which contribute most heavily to the national income; by estimating the consumption schedules for their products (assuming full re-employment) at prices that would yield a tolerable profit on the increased production levels; and by stepping up production simultaneously in all the industries, according to the allotments to be worked out within a framework set by the planning authority. I stress the simultaneous stepping-up of production because what is crucial is the gearing of increased production to increased purchasing-capacity. Unless production is simultaneously stepped up in all the key industries, there will be no general re-employment and therefore no purchasing-capacity adequate to take the increased product of any one industry off its hands.

Obviously such a program could not be carried out without guarantees both to the owners and to the workers. Otherwise the plan would meet resistance in its adoption and sabo-

tage in its execution. The owners of industry, if they consult their immediate advantage in an unplanned capitalism, seek to maximize their total profits, even at the social cost of keeping prices high when demand falls. They will not consent to lowering their price and decreasing their unit profit on the chance that they will sell enough more to maximize their total profit. A government fund which would under proper conditions take the unsold product off their hands so that they would have no loss on their total, would not have to be larger than the billions involved in the present lending-spending program.

Labor, on the other hand, seeks to maximize wages and minimize hours, thus adding restrictions to production just as the owners do. While in an unplanned capitalism this restriction is a counsel of survival, it would not be necessary in a planned collectivism. If the government fund guarantees to labor an increasing annual income for all workers, weekly wages will be able to fit more flexibly into the calculations of the planners. What the workers' earnings would be would actually be determined by the confluence of several factors: an increasing total national income, an increasing workers' share in it, competition between industries for the labor of the workers, real wages as affected by government control of monetary value through control of the money and credit volume and of prices. The socialization of the banking and credit system is a necessary element in any planned economy, whether capitalist or socialist. So also is government control of foreign trade. So also is government direction of the investment process; for investment is the arterial system of industry, determining the total national product and the allocation of that product among industries. It is, moreover, also the most effective weapon that the capitalists have against the progress of a collectivism: the withdrawal of investment, the "flight" of money, the sit-down strike of capital, have all been used against left-wing governments and used to good effect.

The problem of initiative has always loomed large in the discussion of economic planning, as has also the related problem of income spread. "What are you going to use for incentive?" is the correlative of that cynical expression of the capitalist ethos: "What are you going to use for money?" The incentive of the workers will be the higher wages made possible by the increase in the contribution of the industry to the national income. The incentive of the owners will be profits. Those profits will have both a ceiling and a floor set for them by the planning mechanism; but between the two there will be ample room for variation, depending on the excellence of the product and the low cost of production. In the periodic reallocations of output to the various firms within an industry, the showing that any particular firm makes will affect the allocation for the next period. An automobile, for example, whose excellence has caught the popular imagination will be allowed to expand its product with a rapidity that keeps pace with the popular demand, while one that has lost its following will find its product—and its profits—contracting. New products, models, brands, that can attract capital for investment will be given ample scope for experiment, and they will be kept from being crowded out by the monopoly position or patent control which today stifles new enterprise.

One merit of such a plan is that it does not deflect the national energies into the traditional cul-de-sac of progressive governments—trust-busting. Monopoly position is today the prime fact about our industrial system, but in relatively few instances does it take the outright form of trusts. The major part of the industrial system is characterized by a corporate-administered price hegemony divided among several or many producers acting in a loose accord either through trade-association agreements or through holding-company or banker control. The outright monopolies, such as the aluminum industry, should be nationalized immediately. For where only



one producer occupies the field, nothing is to be gained by trying to create many; and the state had better be that producer. The same applies to the public utilities as natural monopolies, and to industries so crucial to the state as munitions. For the rest, the processes of government control involved in planning will put us in a position where we need not fear the price hegemonies that are today's monopolies.

When the task of gearing together consumption, production, income distribution, and investment has been given social responsibility, the owners are left in a valid position where the limited returns they get are returns for management and imagination, and not returns for the power achieved through their capture of the strategic positions in a society.

All this must be accomplished, if it is to be accomplished at all, through democratic procedures. A planned society cannot afford any other, for then the ultimate purposes for which economic security and plenty are sought—cultural enrichment and the flowering of individual talent—are defeated. Whether and how we can plan democratically and still plan effectively are questions I shall seek to answer in detail in a later chapter. Here I want to set down, as one of the few absolutes I should be willing to subscribe to in the realm of government, my own conviction that planning must be attempted democratically or not at all. Such planning must also be peaceful. We want neither a war collectivism nor a brink-of-war collectivism—unless war is thrust upon us as part of the resistance to the majority effort. Even then we must recognize that if it is a necessary evil it is none the less an evil—to be discarded as soon as possible from our polity and economy and rooted out of our culture.

These are the agenda for a democratic collectivism. We shall not achieve them overnight. But they are a target to aim at.

We can organize for them in trade unions and farmers' groups and professional groups. We can shape our new party alignments around them. We can take the economic thinking we have already done blundering-wise and the administrative advances we have already made and build on them in order to attain these objectives. We can direct the thinking and allegiance of our young people to them. It will require infinite drudgery and pain, perhaps more political wisdom than we shall be able to muster, heart-breaking courage and firm-fibered strength, above all a combination of intelligent action and pragmatic thought. It will require a continually increasing knowledge of how our economic mechanisms work, a study of how planning mechanisms work in other countries, and the social imagination to visualize how planning techniques will work best in the context of our own culture.

We may fail. But we must decide at least to try, and decide soon. How long we can continue to bolster our economy through the intervention of the state will depend on how strong the state is. It depends also on how effectively the state meets the resistance of the minority groups who want not a bolstering of their social system but undiluted power to shape it to their own interests and desires. At best, the period cannot be a long one. At any time it may be interrupted by war. Most dangerous of all, the efforts of the crisis state to survive become increasingly ineffective as the triumph of anti-democratic policies in Europe emboldens those in our own state who promise economic security in return for submission.

Of course, the process involves risks. But it is better for us to risk what we have now, lest later there be nothing left for us to risk. Soon, in all probability during our own generation, the issue will be decided. And if by that time we have not had the courage and intelligence to inaugurate a democratically planned collectivism, there will be other groups who will

proceed to enact a planned collectivism of their own. Only they will lack the scruples about democracy that we have, and that alone can make planning responsible.

To sum up the answers to our questions. Capitalism cannot be permanently revived. It survives today because it has placed itself on a brink-of-war collectivist economic footing. That cannot last. But can capitalism plan? It can plan if the majority and its leaders have the courage to take capitalism away from the capitalists, and make its basic decisions socially rational and responsible. But can capitalism be stabilized by planning? Not for long, for it is at best an unstable form. A planned capitalism is a transition step to a planned socialism. Our hope is to make that transition gradual enough to avoid violence, yet effective enough to prevent breakdown. Eventually private ownership, with the economic and cultural power that it carries along with it, must be the exception rather than the rule.

In economic terms, I have tried in this chapter not to sketch an ideal but to describe an imperative. Even thus I have ventured into realms where, were I angelic, I should have feared to tread. There are, however, political problems—problems of the resistance that economic change is meeting and will continue to meet, problems involved in the transfer of power and the transformation of culture—that must be left to the remaining chapters.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER SIX

The detailed economic program in this chapter has been dated by the march of events. The basic conception seems to me to have been strengthened by them. An economic blueprint is at best a shifting affair. But I have sought mainly in

this book to trace the biography of the crisis state and the anatomy of its will. And central to that is what I have called a "democratic collectivism," fixed in purpose, using changing economic strategies to achieve that purpose. The phrase itself has had a currency beyond my expectation. But, as often happens with such phrases, it has come to be used as a symbol with a charged emotional content in ideological battles which seem often rather distant from its original intention.

Emotion aside, however, the evidence of the past five years leaves little doubt that we shall have to move further toward a democratic collectivism or fail in the whole democratic effort. The "sick-bed conference" of the doctors of an unplanned capitalism has been proved futile. The "brink-of-war economy," to which in 1938 I attributed the chief role in keeping capitalism alive, became, in December 1941, a war economy. There is no longer any question whether in technical terms we can organize and keep running an economy without want. The question for the future is whether the war techniques of the conscious maximizing of production and allocation of man power can be carried over to peacetime.

For such a program the particular agenda in this chapter have less relevance than they had in the pre-war period.

Were I writing the book today, I should place less emphasis on the strategy of industrial allotments and more on the strategy of fiscal, monetary, investment, and public works controls. I should also include in my program an intensified campaign of anti-trust and patent control.

But neither Keynesism nor the creed of Thurman Arnold can have meaning or efficacy by themselves. When, however, they encompass the basic problems of income distribution and the reconstruction of political and economic power, they can become parts of a workable plan. I still regard such a plan as the great imperative of our time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

**THE CAREER OF THE  
CRISIS STATE**

1. *Ride in the Whirlwind*
2. *The Natural History of Sabotage*
3. *The Politics of Transition*
4. *Labor and the Middle Class*
5. *Toward a Labor Party*
6. *The End of the Crisis State*

## 1. RIDE IN THE WHIRLWIND

**I**N a sense the state is always in crisis. A pragmatic politician, with the viewpoint of an insider, once described government as "just one damned crisis after another." This sense of tension exists wherever groups of men are struggling to seize or hold power. But sometimes in history there is a crisis period in which not only is the power of some particular government at stake, but the form of the state itself and the maintenance of the prevailing culture.

Ours is that sort of period. The survival of democratic procedures in the state involves a task whose difficulty is, for once, matched by our consciousness of it, if not by our understanding. And the result is that all the processes of government, in a capitalist democracy today, are permeated by a sense of crisis. Rarely has it been given to a generation to have so much the feeling of being caught—to find itself between "we must" and "we dare not" and to observe its own fluttering struggles to be free, as if the butterfly on the slide had been able to turn the microscope on itself. Ours is a history-conscious generation. Thanks largely to the deposit left even in non-Marxian minds by the Marxian sense of the dynamics of history, we are vaguely aware of the possibility that the path of the capitalist democracies may soon parallel that of Germany and Italy, and of the relation of what we do to what will happen to us. Our representative thinkers and leaders see far enough ahead to glimpse their problems, but not far enough to have caught sight of the solutions.

That is why I speak of the crisis state. It is a state caught in

the tensions and dilemmas of an unplanned capitalism, with fascism on one side and a planned democratic collectivism on the other. There are two senses in which the concept of the crisis state can be taken. One is the broad sense in which every capitalist democracy is today a crisis state, no matter what the political complexion of its government—whether Tory or Labour, Popular Front or conservative coalition, Democrat or Republican. The second is the sense in which the crisis state refers more particularly to left-wing governments moving painfully toward socialization within the framework of capitalist democracy and hampered at every step by external and internal tensions. In this second sense we should include the American New Deal, the past and any future Labour government in Great Britain, the French Popular Front governments, the Spanish Popular Front government, the National Revolutionary (labor-agrarian) government of Cárdenas in Mexico, the Labor-Socialist governments of the Scandinavian countries and of Belgium, the Labour government of Australia, and (to stretch a point, for in social structure it is still feudal) the Chinese Nationalist-Popular Front government. Except where I broaden the term specifically to include all capitalist-democratic governments, I shall be using “crisis state” in the more specific sense of the left-wing governments.

One characteristic of the crisis state, and part of its peculiar *mélange* of paradoxes, is that the groups and leaders who compose the crisis governments are all playing unaccustomed roles. They have been forced into these roles by the powerful thrust of economic necessity and political ideals. Thus in the American New Deal administration, an intrinsically conservative aristocrat like President Roosevelt is cast in the role of a Gracchan leader of the industrial and agrarian masses—in order, as he sees it, to save the social system from the extremes of fascism and communism.

The Democratic Party as a whole, with the exception of the more reactionary elements, is cast in the role of the party of social transformation—in the interests of keeping its power; so that, for example, a tough Southern conservative like the late Senate leader, Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, had to perform the job of getting Senatorial majorities for what must have seemed to him revolutionary measures. The Communists, because of their fear of the spread of fascism, are thrust into the role of giving enthusiastic support to New Deal measures that are at best palliative. The Socialists find themselves, by necessity, to the left of the Communists, in the equivocal role of giving neither whole-hearted support nor whole-hearted condemnation to New Deal measures, and happy only when they can direct their full-bodied energies to ridicule of the Communists. The two La Follettes, sons of a great and uncompromising populist, find themselves attacking the New Deal from a position not wholly to the left of it. The Republicans find themselves faced by the alternatives of moving in a fascist direction or suffering extinction. The Democrats, traditional supporters of states' rights, and the Republicans, traditional supporters of centralization, find that they have exchanged roles. Finally, as regards labor, John L. Lewis, long a conservative Republican and a red-baiting labor dictator, finds himself at the head of the CIO, the most powerful and potentially the most revolutionary labor movement in American history; and the American Federation of Labor, never radical, is swept out to sea an unimaginable distance by the political undertow, and finds itself on basic labor policies to the right of the United States Steel Corporation and the General Electric Company.

What is true in America is true as well in France, Spain, Great Britain, Mexico. Traditional political roles and attitudes are possible only when traditional economic arrangements can continue unimpaired. Such a pre-condition no longer exists. The Great Depression, even more than the Great War,



knocked the capitalist democracies as we knew them into a cocked hat. The left parties, which had been preparing themselves for the time when they would be called on to take the helm, found themselves not in a situation where they could experiment with socialism but in one in which their job was to stabilize capitalism; for the collapse of capitalist democracy would mean capitalist fascism. Some of the liberal and most of the progressive groups, who had hoped only to sail along with the smooth headwinds of an expanding capitalism, found themselves pushed leftward and united with the left groups in that most unstable of unities—the unity of possessing common enemies. The split personality of the crisis state and the alternations between radical and middle-of-the-road policies arise, superficially at any rate, from this uneasy union of the progressives and the radicals.

But more deeply they arise from the plight of the crisis state itself. For its job is to transform an economy without what generally accompanies basic economic change—that is, political and social revolution. It must achieve this transformation in the midst of economic depression. And as the American experience has shown, every step it takes in transforming the economy, because it frightens the capitalists and shatters the “business confidence” which is the cement of the capitalist structure, makes it that much more difficult to pull the country out of the depression; and yet every concession to the capitalists, by reason of being a concession to the anarchy of industry, makes more difficult the task of both recovery and reform. The crisis state must move toward an ever greater regulation of business and an ever greater degree of collectivism. Yet it feels it must stop short of the point where it would become a planned economy—that is, where it would take the major decisions away from the capitalists. And because it stops short at that point, it leaves itself dependent upon the capitalists and their decisions.

Thus President Roosevelt had a chance in 1933 to socialize the mechanisms of banking, credit, and investment. He shrank back from the prospect, and throughout his first term his effort never went farther than the building of a framework for regulating business. The result was that when, during his second term, he found himself forced by the logic of economic and political necessity to transform a war against the depression into a campaign for limiting and displacing the power of the oligarchs, he was confronted by the very weapons he had originally left in their hands. His program was fought by every means at their disposal, but most powerfully by the control they exercised over investment. By stopping investment—what Mr. Roosevelt called the “sit-down strike of capital”—they could dry up the arteries of the economic system.

It is here that we reach the core of the dilemma. The crisis state must seek to transform an economy without revolutionizing it. It is handicapped by working in a period of depression, when capital must be encouraged, yet that very crisis makes drastic measures necessary. It seeks to hem in the power of the capitalists, while leaving with them their ultimate power which they can use to fight major reforms. Finally it must move under a cloud of continual concealment. For it leaves the control over the channels of mass opinion in the hands of the barons of opinion. The press, above all, remains the Black Watch of corporate capitalist power. And what the crisis state does in the direction of socialization, it must do without calling it by its true name.

Take the Tennessee Valley Authority as an instance. It embodies one of the soundest ideas of the New Deal—the idea of government experimentation with public ownership in the hydro-electric field and with the regional social changes that such ownership could effect. But that sound idea has had to be worked out with the utmost deviousness. In the first place, there were the taboos placed on it by the Supreme Court

tradition. What was essentially a project for liberating the consumer from the tyranny of the utility holding-companies and for giving some dynamic economic energy to the waning South had therefore to be dressed up as a measure of national defense and navigation control. Then there were the press taboos against public ownership; and so the TVA had to enter elaborate denials that it involved any competition with the utilities, and had to contrive the "yardstick," with its accompanying controversies about accounting methods and allocation of costs.

Politics is always, in part at least, rhetoric; and politics in time of danger is doubly so. But the crisis state is in the peculiar position of having first to contrive measures that will work, and having at the same time to contrive rhetoric that will conceal the true purpose and effect of those measures.

The task of government under such conditions is one requiring consummate qualities of firmness of purpose and flexibility of tactic. In the midst of internal economic depression and external war tensions, having to face a reactionary barrage at every step and having to attempt democratic solutions in a world-framework tending toward fascism, the crisis state has become one of the turbulent adventures in history. It holds today the hopes of the best in the western cultural tradition. But its survival and the triumph of those hopes depend, as in Addison's poem, on its capacity to "ride in the whirlwind and direct the storm."

## 2 . THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SABOTAGE

I should like to suggest in this chapter some of the stages in the career of the crisis state, from its inception in the reaction against an anarchic capitalism to its final challenge in civil war

—to chart out the sequence of difficulties that left-wing capitalist democracies have to face in their movement toward socialization. Although our generation is a history-conscious one, no one has yet written a *Mein Kampf* to map the trajectory of internal capitalist action as Hitler has mapped the trajectory of fascism in the firmament of European foreign affairs. Nor has anyone yet propounded a Mohawk Valley formula which would tell capitalists how to break not only a strike but a whole social system. Yet while the plans do not exist on paper, they have been written into the history of the past decade, since the collapse of the MacDonald government in Great Britain. They are part of the annals of British, French, Spanish, Mexican, and American politics.

To describe them would be to trace what amounts to the natural history of capitalist sabotage. The concept of sabotage was, until Veblen examined it, restricted to deliberate interference by the workers with the processes of production. Veblen broadened it to include as well the “conscientious withdrawal of efficiency” on the part of the capitalists: their deliberate restriction of production while keeping prices high in order to maximize profits. In this sense, capitalist sabotage was “business as usual.” But we have discovered, since Veblen wrote, that capitalism is resourceful not only in the economic realm, but in the political as well, in breaking up all attempts to interfere with “business as usual”—or, as it is now called, “business confidence.” That resourcefulness too is a form of capitalist sabotage.

When a left-wing government achieves office in a capitalist democracy, it is generally because of some particularly drastic dislocation of productive enterprise and a particularly steep descent in the curve of welfare. Only under such circumstances can the progressives muster enough solidarity, as in France and Spain, or win over a major party to their cause, as in America, to break through the front-line trenches of the oligarchs. Gen-

erally the oligarchs, confident of their ability to rule and secure in the tradition of their power, are taken by surprise at the progressive victory. If their own economic plight is serious enough, they may themselves turn to the new government for supreme unction, and cling to it against the imminent darkness. This is what happened in America in the winter and spring of 1932-33. The great bankers confronting a "run," the corporate executives confronting a profit curve careening downward out of sight, and the barons of opinion petrified by their fear of a genuine revolution of the masses, all awaited the Roosevelt regime eagerly. They waited as eagerly as did the unemployed workers, the starving farmers, the bewildered middle class, for the president to translate the "action, and action now," of his Inaugural Address into reality. In fact, months before his inauguration the Hoover administration was willing to turn over to him the reins of government. The rulers confessed their inability further to rule.

But they soon discovered that, while they could not rule, neither could the progressives rule without them. This was more notably true in the case of the British Labour government and the French and Spanish Popular Fronts than in the case of the Roosevelt government. What was lacking was the will to power. When the oligarchs get over their original panic, they discover this essential lack, as they have discovered it in every case so far. They then lay their plans for a long-drawn-out campaign of attack and sabotage.

We have seen this campaign in action often enough for us to draw up instructions for future campaigns of the same sort. The detailed sequence of moves will, of course, vary with the national and historical situation, as the detailed application will vary with the national character. But the rough pattern of a tactic for the oligarchs may have some general relevance.

"In the first place," we may say to them, "use the press and

radio to limit severely in the popular mind the task and function of the progressive government. It must be 'recovery' and not 'reform'; it must bring re-employment but not incite to class war; it must help business to function but must not experiment with wild plans. And create at the same time, again through press and radio, a distrust and contempt for the men shaping the policies of the new regime. Concentrate on a few men behind the scenes. Call them the Brain Trust or the General Staff or the Janizaries or the Ogpu. Exploit the anti-intellectualism of the majority, their fear of ideas, their fear especially of a secret government. Hint that the formal heads of the state are virtually the prisoners of this cabal.

"Aim directly at the sources of popular strength on which the crisis state draws. The most important is the strength of its labor support. Put obstacles at every turn in the way of labor organization. A system of labor espionage is good. Propaganda war-chests are helpful: sell the idea to the public of the 'right to work' even as against the tyranny of labor bureaucrats. Call it 'the American way' (or 'the French way' or 'the Mexican way'). Use money discreetly in placing advertising in the newspapers whose editors see the light on the question of capital and labor, and withdraw advertising from the others. Hire efficient public-relations counsel; this is the age of organization, and nothing must be done sloppily. Hire also spokesmen who are not professional publicity men but presumably independent columnists or lecturers—but who can, of course, be had for a price. The public must become convinced that for labor to organize is un-American (or un-French or un-Mexican), that labor organizers are reds and aliens, and that trade-union leaders are bureaucrats and racketeers who live luxuriously on the dues extracted from members by the check-off.

"If strikes do break out, spare nothing in smashing them. To be sure, there are some capitalist spokesmen who will tell

you that it costs more to fight a strike than to make a settlement. But that is to sacrifice to immediate interest the long-run interest of the business community as a whole. Two formulas have been evolved for smashing strikes—the Mohawk Valley formula and the Johnstown formula. Combine them. Have tear-gas bombs and machine-guns stored in the plants. Organize deputies, vigilante groups, Black Legions, student corps, to smash picket-lines and terrorize union headquarters. But also do not fail to use the subtler means. Organize Citizens' Committees, consisting of the local ministers, professors, editors, bankers, civic leaders, Chamber of Commerce heads, and women's club leaders. Mobilize public opinion on the capacity of the local community to settle its own labor difficulties without the intervention of outside agitators. Organize 'back-to-work movements' among the workers, behind which make certain to line up the middle class in the community. Make it clear to the retail merchants that they will be put out of business if they extend credit to strikers' families. Point out to white-collar workers, department-store clerks, professional people, that the burden of the strike is falling upon them, and underline the fact by cutting down the retail force. Finally, if nothing else succeeds, resort to massacre of strikers by the police and special deputies. But this should be done rarely, since its too frequent use will cause a revulsion of feeling and prove a boomerang.

"The best material to work with is middle-class insecurity and middle-class hysteria. This can be exploited more effectively if there is a 'wave' of strikers rather than sporadic outbreaks; or if they are 'wildcat' strikes, unsanctioned by the central union leadership; or if they are sit-down strikes, which may be denounced as aiming at the whole institution of private property; or, best of all, if there is something extensive enough to be labeled a General Strike. For a general strike will allow you to mobilize the full force of the community

consciousness, appealing to patriotism against class domination, pointing out the way in which a whole community is at the mercy of a few revolutionists, and evoking the dormant craving for excitement among the young, who can be called out to man the transport system and guard the electric current.

"More important even than the campaign against labor organization and strikes is the task of splitting the labor movement. The British imperialists, who have learned how to deal with large, disaffected subject populations, call this the policy of 'Divide and Rule.' It can be used with labor as well as with colonial peoples. Just as the British in India have fanned the religious hostility between the Moslems and the Hindus, so you can fan the hostility between the left and right wings of the labor movement. In America, for example, concentrate your fire on the CIO, and strengthen the A. F. of L. wherever you can. Help the A. F. of L. unions to organize your factories, and sign agreements with them so as to forestall the organizing efforts of the CIO. Encourage the struggle between the two in the election contests before the National Labor Relations Board, and keep up a barrage of criticism of the board itself. Above all, use the anti-Communist feeling within labor itself to your own purposes. It is easier to split a labor movement over the issue of the Moscow trials or the question of isolation or collective security, or the charges of Communist control, than to smash it through espionage, citizens' committees, or police bullets. Once the labor movement is split, the political force of labor is neutralized, and the strength that the crisis state derives from that force is lost.

"The support of the farmers must similarly be weakened. Stress the native independence of the 'independent farmer,' and the fact that while he may be receiving handouts from the government, he is not being put in a position for self-help. But, above everything, foment the traditional hostility of town and country, urban and rural, worker and farmer. Farmers and



peasants in every country are more conservative than the industrial workers. Even though they may be as dependent ultimately on the capitalist banks that supply their credit, and the insurance companies that hold their mortgages, and the commodity exchanges that manipulate the price of their commodities, and the industrial processes that supply or deny a market to those commodities, they seem in their own minds to be individual enterprisers with their own property in land and tools and houses. Play on that sense of property. And play even more on the fact that the products the farmers must buy are increased in price by the trade-union demands and by the labor legislation of a reform government. Use the county Granges, the rural press, and the Farm Hour on the radio to spread the idea that the CIO represents a threat not only to employers but to farmers as well. Play on the fear of the farmers that their farm laborers and farm tenants and sharecroppers will be organized. Associate the labor organizers as far as possible with the government. And point out that not only is the government attempting a revolution in private property, but it is also setting up a tyrannical bureaucracy to coerce the farmers into complying with measures restricting production.

“But the weak link in the chain of groups supporting the crisis state is the middle class. This class—consisting of the technicians, white-collar groups, professional groups, those engaged in the marketing and distributive system, small businessmen, small investors, the housewives, the people with annuities and with small funded incomes—holds the balance of power in the crisis state. Its members have voted for a progressive government, let us say, because they have shrunk back in fear from the prospect of an insecure future under a collapsing capitalism, with revolution always a threatening possibility. But they did not bargain for a revolutionary government. Get across to them the idea that what they have is a revolutionary government. Get across to them also the idea that instead of

voting an insecure future out, they have voted it in. For they have voted in a government that is not willing to abide by its promises, and cuts the value of the dollar—and therefore of salaries and funded income—by inflation; a government, moreover, that spends huge amounts for the social services which either have to come out of taxation or must be borne by later generations, making the future still more insecure; a government, finally, that is attacking the whole business structure, making it imperative for the small businessmen to stand with their fellows.

“You will understand that direct action is as necessary as propaganda in sabotaging the crisis state. Start with the administrative process itself. Get your own men into important administrative posts. This was enormously effective in transforming the NRA from a device for creating re-employment into a device for cartelizing industry. When this is no longer possible, attack the administrative boards and commissions at their most vulnerable points. Lump them all together as an unwieldy bureaucracy, eating up the taxpayer’s money. Accuse them of labor bias and leftism. Direct Congressional investigations at them. But, above all, attack them as tyrannies for violating the principle of the separation of powers and the spirit of the judicial process—for being lawmakers and administrators at the same time, and prosecutor, jury, and judge all in one. And, of course, you will know how to drain off the best technical and administrative talent of the government through the offer of lucrative posts. Who would not rather be a high-paid corporation executive than a New Deal Spartacus?

“Naturally, you will make use of the courts. They have acted as a powerful line of defense against left-wing democratic thrusts at every crucial period in the past. While the Supreme Court has turned liberal, the lower and intermediate federal courts may still be used. A far-reaching program of reform can be crippled and almost indefinitely delayed by a well-

planned series of suits and injunctions in the courts. You have the legal talent of the country at your command; worry the government lawyers and divide their forces by multiplying suits. The way in which the TVA power program was tied up in the courts may serve as a model. The same is true in the fight against the decisions of the Labor Board, and against the registration provisions of the Public Utility Holding Company Act.

"It will be more difficult to sabotage the legislative process, but that too can be done. The chief dependence should be on the upper chamber. The British House of Lords proved a drag on the Labour government. The French Senate forced the Blum cabinet out by refusing to vote his financial measures, although he had a clear majority in the Chamber of Deputies. And the American Senate proved the bulwark of Big Industry in Roosevelt's second administration on the question of the undistributed profits tax and the capital gains tax.

"But the tactic in both houses should be the same. If the party in power has returned an overwhelming majority, attack the legislature as a 'rubber-stamp Congress.' This will worry the middle class, which fears the tyranny of the executive and believes somehow that the truth cannot possibly be as lopsided as the large majorities would indicate. It will also worry the legislators, who think well of themselves and do not want their dinner companions to conclude that they are yes-men. Play on the pride of some of the legislative party leaders. Magnify the slights that are inseparable from the rough-and-tumble of party politics. Dramatize them as rugged, homely thinkers who put horse-sense above utopias (e.g., Garner) or as noble Romans who put the truth above party (e.g., Wheeler). Nurse the members of the conservative wing of the party carefully until you have effected a party split. Follow a careful tactic in unifying the opposition against important administration meas-

ures. Push into the foreground the leaders of the president's party who have split with him, and keep yourselves in the background. Let them get the kudos while you get the results. In the case of measures that cannot be beaten if they come to a vote, because of the large pressure groups and appeal groups behind them, prevent them from coming to a vote by working through the Rules Committee, or delay or truncate them by working through the other Congressional committees. The important committees, because of the seniority principle, are generally filled with conservatives. Capture the key people, and the task of sabotage is greatly lightened.

"Then there is the executive. Remember that mud, if it is thrown often enough, finally sticks. Picture the executive as stubborn, self-willed, and impractical, a dreamer bemused in a humanitarian dream. Publish pictures of him that show his resemblance to well-known dictators. Accuse him of seeking a 'purge' of his enemies. Maintain a whispering campaign about the things that cannot be published. If he has an ailment or physical disability, shroud it in mystery. If he is Jewish, play that up. If not, and if his name permits the association, charge him with being a Jew. Circulate stories hinting at mental unbalance. Above all make him out arbitrary, radical, fanatic.

"Along with these maneuvers on the political front, it is well to lay down an unceasing artillery barrage on the battlefield of opinion. Link your cause with the tradition of civil liberties. Depict the industrialist as deprived of due process of law by the action of administrative commissions. Link your cause also to the symbol of the Constitution, which is the strongest symbol in American life. Use the press for extended propaganda crusades in which the administration is accused of flagrant disregard of the Constitution, and link it with reds whose purpose is to smash the Constitution. Establish a large

variety of patriotic organizations and Leagues to Uphold the Constitution; and put behind them the money of Big Industry. Mobilize for your purpose the powerful veterans' groups, who can easily be swayed by patriotic slogans.

"Keep your strength in the field of finance and investment in reserve for critical occasions. Use it as one of your last lines of defense. But if the government is determined to proceed with a drastic reform program, use that line of defense. The MacDonald government finally collapsed under pressure from the Bank of England and the raids on the pound. The Blum government was ousted by the Bank of France and raids on the franc. The second Roosevelt administration was thrown into a panic by the freezing up of investment and the withdrawal of capital from productive enterprise.

"Keep ever on guard for some 'incident' or *affaire* to exploit. Remember the Zinoviev letters in Great Britain, the Stavisky *affaire* in France, the excitement over Justice Black's appointment in America. At a critical moment these may succeed in destroying the prestige of a government when nothing else can.

"Refrain from actual conspiracies until the end. The Cagouard conspiracy in France, the Franco army conspiracy in Spain—these verge on civil war and treasonable negotiations with foreign powers. They should not be used until all else is lost and civil war alone remains."

Thus might a new Machiavelli address the princes of reaction today, advising them not on how they may govern, but on how they may keep others from governing. Thus might he write the natural history of sabotage as a handbook for the groups determined to place obstacles in the path of the democratic crisis state. If he wrote thus, he would be setting down not a speculative counsel of perfection, but an induction from the experience of the New Deal in America and corresponding governments in its sister crisis democracies.

### 3. THE POLITICS OF TRANSITION

But the battle is by no means as uneven as would appear from this survey of the tactics that have been used against the crisis state. Its enemies have the strategic ground and the superior artillery. But it has—or can muster—the big voting battalions, the technical skill, the administrative patience, the morale. The transition to a planned and socialized economy is no easy path. But for a militant and tough-minded democracy, it lies within the realm of possible traversal.

Crisis government is essentially executive and administrative government. Democracies have at various times in their history veered toward an emphasis on one or another of Montesquieu's three separated powers of the state—the legislative, the judicial, the executive. In the early stages, while they were winning their release from feudal restrictions, the democratic states emphasized the legislative and judicial. The freedom of the people's representatives to discuss, to legislate, to control the purse strings; and the subjection of absolute monarchs and feudal lords to a common rule of law: it was natural that one or the other of these should be underscored. The liberal European theorists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took the essence of the democratic form to be a representative assembly, a *parliament* where the people could talk through their representatives. To conservative theorists like Carlyle this concentration on talk was one of the weaknesses of democracy, and Carlyle's criticism has been revived and echoed by the fascist theorists of today. The fact is that the capitalist democracies, beset by pressures from the Right and Left and faced by enormous problems of economic control, have since the World War become to an increasing degree executive governments.

This has involved a movement away from both the legislative and judicial powers. America is an interesting case in point. The American state has been in turn Congressional government (before the Civil War), government by judiciary (between the Civil War and the World War), and presidential government (during the past quarter-century). In the early period the legislature mapped the general lines of social policy. In the middle period the courts, in defiance of the legislatures, enforced a *laissez-faire* program. In the latest period war and reform have compelled an increasing recourse to administrative regulation of business. Cutting across these time-patterns is the fact that we have tended to have presidential government during the tenure of strong presidents and in every period of crisis. But today the compulsion of the job to be done is so great that any executive, strong or weak, whether or not, like Mr. Roosevelt, he dominates the legislature by his prestige and smokes the Supreme Court out of its reactionary positions, must make himself the spearpoint of his government. This has been a necessity not only for the leftist governments of Blum in France, Cárdenas in Mexico, and Roosevelt in America, but also for the rightist Baldwin and Chamberlain governments in Great Britain, and for the centrist Daladier government in France and Beneš government in Czechoslovakia.

To recognize this fact is one thing; to extract its meaning is quite another. We must not succumb to the current tendency to set it down to the debility of parliamentary institutions. It is a species of drivel to argue that government by representative bodies is ineffectual and decadent, and it is the sort of drivel, moreover, that plays into the hands of the fascists. Representative bodies, genuinely representative both of majority and of minorities instead of the hand-picked wooden soldiers who form the parliaments of totalitarian states, were never more necessary than today. And the same applies to judicial bodies.

Both have spheres marked out for them. Outside those spheres they may be not only ineffectual but even harmful: as when the American judiciary attempts to substitute its own notions of social policy for those of Congress. But within those spheres their continued vitality is necessary.

The judiciary performs its healthy function when it limits itself to applying and interpreting laws and legal canons to individual cases of litigation, instead of passing on issues of social policy. Due process of law as ensuring procedural fairness and exhaustiveness is an essential in any democracy, whether capitalist or socialist. But due process of law as a substantive concept may easily be used to defeat the will of the legislature on basic questions of social control.

The legislatures in the emerging state will act increasingly to shape the broad lines of policy and social direction. But the initiation and the detailed drafting of the legislation they pass must be left to the executive. For new legislation in the modern state grows out of administrative experience with the old legislation, and is meant to correct, supplement, or replace it. Those who are engaged in the actual task of economic co-ordination—that is to say, the various executive departments and administrative boards and commissions—cannot merely carry out the marching orders drawn up by the legislature. They must be part of the general staff that drafts those marching orders. In the conduct of foreign affairs there is still another consideration. That is the area in which the democratic state has been thus far at the greatest disadvantage in comparison with the dictatorships. For here is an area in which survival depends upon quick decisions, forced diplomatic marches, surprise attacks, concerted defense, single-minded clarity of purpose. Within the broad lines of policy laid down by the legislative, and with its ultimate power of ratification or rejection, the executive must apply to foreign affairs the suppleness and decisiveness of which it alone is capable.



But there is one area in which the functions of the legislature must be increased and intensified. It must act as a sounding-board for the people in expressing majority sentiment on all larger issues of policy. And it must also be eternally vigilant in its scrutiny of executive and judicial acts. For it is the legislatures rather than the courts that must in the future be the watch-dogs of our liberties. As long as we held the notion that the majority will was dangerous, it was natural that the courts should be regarded as the guardians of individual liberty as against the legislatures. But increasingly the crisis state must concentrate power in the hands of the executive in the interests of efficiency and survival. The courts must protect individual litigants, but the protection of the majority will and of minority rights as against the possible tyranny of the executive is much better left in the hands of the legislatures. They must give opposition sentiment its principal channel of expression, and direct a continual play of criticism upon both majority proposals and executive acts. To carry out this function they must not only talk, and talk with passion and astringency; they must also have broad investigatory powers for keeping track of the way legislation is administered, and for ferreting out the sabotaging efforts of non-governmental groups.

This still leaves the administrative bodies and the executive general staff as the spearpoint of social advance in the crisis state. Until other weapons are forced upon them, the transition democracies must fight with administrative weapons. It is neither accident nor whim that the New Deal is dotted with "alphabetical" agencies such as the TVA, the SEC, the NLRB, the HOLC. Each of these occupies a salient on the advancing front of the transition to a socialized state. The administrative agencies are slowly amassing a knowledge of the material they must shape. They are learning through painful trial and error the intricate ways of an unplanned economic system and the devious ways in which the oligarchs wield extra-governmental

power. They are discovering the contours of our system of constitutional and administrative law—in an area which has thus far been an undiscovered country from whose bourne the few venturesome travelers have not returned. They are perfecting their legal techniques, to see how far toward social efficiency they can go without being stopped by the courts in a system of capitalist law; they are perfecting their economic techniques to see how far they can go before being sabotaged by those in control of the economic processes.

They are pioneers in a more important sense than any Americans have been pioneers since the frontier settlers, the machine technologists, the industrial innovators. They are accustomed to obstacles; but if the obstacles are too great, their pioneering gains will surely be wiped out. The men involved in them in the American government today have ability, patience, stamina, judgment, vision. But they must also have morale, and be able to communicate it by contagion to their staffs. That morale is possible only if, through the vision and courage of the executive and the men shaping policies at the top, the administrative staffs are given a framework within which their efforts will have some meaning. The history of the alternations of success and failure in the New Deal may be closely correlated with the history of the ebb and flow of administrative morale.

It is part of the politics of transition to create this framework for the vast administrative effort that the crisis state must make. For eventually the administrative agencies will become spokes in the smoothly running wheel of a planned democratic economy. But until that time, while they are still only parts of an unevenly regulated capitalism, they must have scope for experiment and growth. The executive in a crisis state has thus a double task—administrative and political. Of its administrative function I have spoken. Its political function is the broad mapping out of social strategy—the sequence of major steps to be taken in transforming an economy and meet-

ing the sabotaging efforts of the capitalists and their spokesmen.

For this purpose the executive must be not only the dramatic and resourceful head of the state, capable of outguessing, outthinking, and outmaneuvering his opponents. He must also be adept as a party leader and skillful in welding together the otherwise loose assortment of allied groups upon whom the crisis state must depend for its ultimate sources of strength. Such men are rare. Transition politics to be successful must be, more than anything else, the politics of dynamic leaders and evocative slogans. That is why the American New Deal has gone farther along the road to socialization, in a shorter time, than any other crisis state. But the danger with such leaders is their tendency to exploit those personal qualities on which they can get a quick political return, to the neglect of convictions and sustained plans more deeply needed for the transition to a socialized state. That has been to an extent true of Mr. Roosevelt, as it has been true of M. Blum. The reason for it lies partly in the fact that their social experience does not come from the class that they are leading. Had either of them been a working-class leader instead of a humanitarian who included the workers in his human perspectives, he could not have taken the policy he took on the Spanish Civil War.

Not that membership in the working class is itself adequate. Ramsay MacDonald, although originally a worker, turned out in the end to be a sort of professorial liberal *manqué*, with the fuzzy tender-mindedness and the fatal hankering after respectability of that species. Mr. Roosevelt, more than any other of the leaders of the crisis state, has shown a tenacity to which he always returns even if it is not always sustained. With greater courage than any other leader he has resisted the sabotage by the oligarchs, and with greater agility than any other leader he has outmaneuvered his opponents and shown

his capacity, in his own words, "to get things done politically."

He has understood the nature of transition politics, even when he has not always followed out his insights. That it is primarily executive government, with emphasis on the administrative agencies; that it is leadership politics, with the dominant emphasis on the allegiance the leader is able to get, his militancy, his buoyancy, his suppleness of tactics, his knowledge above all of when to retreat as well as when to advance; that it is party politics, in which new party alignments are inevitable, and in which the bitterest battles must be fought within the party itself; that, as in any war, it involves the gathering of a great general staff, but also the welding together of massive and irresistible strength in the ranks—these are the insights that a leader in the crisis state must have into the nature of the task to be done and his own place in it.

#### 4 . LABOR AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

The knottiest problem in the whole tactic of the crisis state turns on the question of its class base. There are those who consider all states to be class states, and who want to move from a capitalist state toward a workers' state. They shape their views of the tactics of the transition period accordingly. There are those who, whether or not they believe in the class view of the state, want to move toward the middle-class state. They may hold to the class view, and yet believe that the middle class—as the strategic balance-of-power class—is the strongest base for a state. Or they may reject the class view, and consider the state merely as a broker between conflicting group claims. Yet, desiring an equilibrium of power between the

classes, they may consider the middle class most competent to perform this broker's function. In either case they shape their views of the tactic of the transition period accordingly. We are today in the midst of a struggle between these conceptions of transition politics. The question of the relative roles of labor and the middle class in the strategy of today and the power-pattern of tomorrow comes close to being the central question for determining the direction of the crisis state.

It is raised in its sharpest form by those who are sympathetic to labor, but who fear that labor's bid for state power will result in a fascist reaction. Their reasoning is that the middle class, grown fearful because of government encroachments, with their implied threat of socialism, and grown hysterical because of labor militancy and violence, may become fodder for the fascist schemes.

There is some acuteness of social perception in this view. And yet it is ultimately untenable. Whether the middle class is used as fascist fodder depends not upon whether labor is militant or passive, nor upon whether government moves forward or stands still. It depends upon the capacity of an unplanned economic system to hold together much longer. Suppose that labor were to accept starvation wages without resistance and that the mass-production industries were to be left unorganized, as under the A. F. of L. dominance in the early years of the Great Depression. Suppose that government were to remain inactive, as in the same Hoover days. Would we thereby avoid fascism?

It is very unlikely that we would. A collapsing capitalism would force a reorganization of state power by the capitalists themselves. Corporate capitalism in order to halt the decline of profits would become fascist capitalism by cutting labor costs further and putting the economic system on a war basis. The trade unions would be smashed. And if no violence were

evoked in resistance to this move, it would be necessary to invent it as an excuse for destroying democratic forms.

No, the warning against labor organization and democratic militancy, on the ground that they provoke fascism, is mainly a counsel of fear. There can be no retreat for the crisis state on the issue of pushing strongly the organization of its workers. A strong labor movement is not in itself an assurance against the victory of fascism, as the German and Austrian experiences have shown. Yet it is a pre-condition of having even a chance at a successful resistance. Without it a country would be beaten at the very start. We have here again an illustration of the difference between the necessary and the adequate.

Whether or not labor is to have complete power in the end, its central place in any scheme of democratic defense of the crisis state cannot be denied. In England the Labour Party and the trade unions form the principal opposition, however much we might wish it more militant, to the fascist leanings of the tory governments in foreign policy and to an extent in internal affairs. In France the trade unions are the heart of the Popular Front. Spain would have been a fascist state long ago were it not for the heroic resistance of the trade unions. In America one could not conceive of the New Deal government's having its present political complexion were it not for the doubling of trade-union strength in the past five years and were it not for the entrance of the new vigor and militancy of the CIO, which is hastening the maturity of the American labor movement.

Mr. Roosevelt is by no means a working-class leader, as, for example, is John L. Lewis. There is a basic difference of political conception between them, not so much in the nature of their social program as in its base. One wants to use a hybrid middle-class and labor base, working inside the old party formations; the other wants a labor base for an ultimate

labor party. Yet it is significant that the growth of a strong and militant trade-unionism has thus far been essential for the aims of both. The Wagner Act and the Labor Relations Board are integral to the purposes of both. Mr. Roosevelt's re-election in 1936 was important to those who differed from his conception of political tactics, because without him it would have been impossible to maintain and consolidate the gains made in labor organization. So equally was a strong labor movement important in Mr. Roosevelt's re-election and in the bitter battles of his second term.

There are certain facts about labor's role in the crisis state that would find pretty general agreement among all progressive groups. A strong labor movement is a barricade erected against fascism: through their economic power and through their influence upon mass opinion, democratic trade unions are obstacles to the fascist advance. Secondly, a strong labor movement is a necessary economic base for progressive political action. Finally, a strong labor movement makes possible a discipline in co-operative democratic action, and a nucleus for the cultural formations of the future. It is for these reasons, along with a commonly shared hatred of fascism, that concerted action of labor and non-labor groups is possible in a democratic Popular Front.

I have already discussed Popular Fronts in an earlier chapter, from the angle of the plight of the radical movements. Their place in the crisis state is an important one. It is safe to say that no left-wing capitalist democracy could long survive without some kind of Popular Front formation. In fact the very notion of a capitalist democracy supported and even run by left-wing labor and progressive groups is an anomalous one, unless its contradictions are bridged by the far-flung span of a Popular Front.

The Popular Front need not be called one to be one. In

France and Spain the term is used to describe the temporary fusion of existing radical and labor parties with existing middle-class progressive parties for the specific purpose of democratic defense and the achievement of higher living standards. In America no radical and labor parties with any strength on a national scale and really worth the name yet exist to become units in such a fusion; yet the social fact of a Popular Front is to be found in the Roosevelt administration. For the New Deal unites with the Democratic Party the trade-union and farmer groups that correspond to those which in other countries have become the nuclei of strong Communist, Socialist, and Labor parties. America has then an incipient Popular Front. It needs only the maturing of a labor party and the further stress of internal and external fascist dangers to precipitate the actual pattern.

Yet Popular Fronts in any form are precarious affairs, and must ultimately, when they have served their purpose, give way to other formations. They are deeply divided by economic and class lines. The constituent groups have different traditions and modes of action. There is, for all the mutual tolerance, a continuing strain of remembrance of things past—rancors that can never be stamped out. Only an imminent cataclysmic danger can bring together the disparate groups that compose a Popular Front. Only the continuance of such a danger can keep them together. The stockade that encircles them and makes a loose unity out of them is built on the narrow ground of the possession of common enemies and common fears.

Nevertheless, it is a good stockade and I am for it. It serves to protect the small clearing of a common cultural heritage against the barbarians of the forest. Eventually it is our hope that the whole forest will be cleared and subdued and the stockade no longer necessary. Meanwhile, however, the danger is real. And in their common vigil in the face of the enemy



there is a chance for the defenders to get new insights into each other and learn new tolerances.

But two qualifications must be made about this common vigil. First, it has intellectual limitations. And, second, it has a logical end.

In intellectual terms the common front between labor and middle-class groups is preserved by suspending disagreements in order to concentrate upon the area of agreement. This is excellent, provided that the disagreements are not wholly out of proportion to the agreements; and provided also that the underlying principles which give meaning to the union of the groups on both sides are not vitiated by the contrived and opportunistic character of the agreements. To keep these principles from being openly jettisoned, the intellectual method of Popular Fronts has to be highly personalized. The enemy-symbol becomes the very center of political action. Increasingly there comes a tendency to judge proposals not so much in terms of their basic merits as in terms of who supports and opposes them. Politics becomes a vast *argumentum ad hominem*. As a tactic this is convenient, for it enables the groups in the Popular Front to accommodate otherwise rigid principles to changing situations without too much loss of face. Yet in the long run it is questionable. By substituting the friend-enemy relation for the devotion to principles and objectives, it paves the way for the fluid and lightning-like changes of political allegiance on the part of the masses which made it possible for millions of German workers and middle-class folk to change from communism to fascism.

I have said that the Popular Front has its logical end delimited for it. As long as the burning question is the defense of democracy against fascism, that end is postponed. But eventually—assuming our victory—we shall have to face the question of what to do with the capitalist democracy we have suc-

cessfully defended. Then we shall have also to face the fact that, by those who want a middle-class state, capitalism has been bolstered in order to mend and preserve it; while by those who want a workers' state, democracy has been defended in order to give them the breathing-spell they need for rallying their forces and transforming capitalism. To many, one or the other side of this contradiction will prove an unwelcome truth. To many the anticipation of it proves so at the present time.

But I do not believe this presents a final impasse. Those who think that it does assume that after the common danger has been met, the labor and middle-class groups will have to confront and fight each other, and that it is therefore hypocritical of them to pretend friendship now. But this by no means follows. If, as is altogether likely, the capitalists force a civil war upon the democratic allies, the differences between the labor and middle-class objectives will be burned away in the alembic of war—as is happening today to the democratic cause in Spain, regardless of whether the outcome be victory or defeat. If a civil war is avoided, the very process of transcending the compulsives that seem to lead to it will have called forth from the two groups attitudes that make possible an accommodation of their differences.

For the fact is that the labor forces, whether they operate through parties bearing their own label or through the already established middle-class parties, cannot triumph without revolutionary violence unless their whole striving is to achieve a democratic majority. And the very process of forging such a majority in order to operate a planned state capitalism, and then of consolidating that majority in order to transform it into a planned socialism, is a process in which class differences will be whittled away both on the side of labor and on the side of its middle-class allies.

## 5. TOWARD A LABOR PARTY

In a real sense every party is a class party, yet no party within a democratic framework is wholly that. The party that leads a capitalist democracy finally to a completely socialized economy must be basically a labor party.

I use the term "labor" in both its narrow and its broad sense. I mean the workers, especially the industrial workers, partly because of the power that their strategic position gives them in an industrial economy, and partly because of the unity that their common strivings force upon them. But I mean also the non-proletarian workers—the technicians and farmers and professionals and intellectuals. We shall need the qualities that all these groups offer. We shall need the sheer sweat and courage, the good will, the common sense, the undegraded human perspectives of proletarian labor. We shall need also the technological and planning and military and administrative skills of what are termed the "middle-class" groups. Neither can do without the other and still achieve economic stability and socialization through democratic means. Neither can hope for that sort of stability from a system dominated by the capitalists.

It will be clear that I am speaking here of an ultimate accommodation between labor and lower middle-class groups, and not about the acquiescence of the capitalists in the shift of power that socialization implies. I want to reserve for the next chapter the discussion of capitalist acquiescence and the problems of power that it raises. There is all too much of a tendency to confuse the two problems, and to speak of the gulf that separates labor from the lower middle class as if it were as great as that which separates labor from the dominant capitalist class. I do not want to underestimate the extent of the former, or the extent of the potential danger that the middle class

represents to a democratic process of socialization. It was the underestimate of that danger which was, as I have pointed out in an earlier chapter, one of the drastic errors of the Marxian tactic.

The error was to write off the middle class as powerless; only to have it turn about and prove that this was premature. The danger of the middle class lies in its fear and insecurity; and in its subjection to the crudest stereotypes struck off by the capitalist barons of opinion. But that fact serves to define the task of labor: to win sections of the middle class over to the aims and tactics of a planned economic order and the achievement of a higher national income and higher living standards for all. At the very least there is a chance to neutralize the middle class; at best there is a chance to gain its active aid in the struggles that confront the labor parties.

Viewed in this perspective, we may set down five propositions touching the political action of labor in relation to the middle class. First, labor cannot strike out for itself in an independent party, free of Popular Front alliances, until it has reached a greater degree of maturity than it has thus far achieved in any of the crisis states. It cannot go any faster politically in independent action than it goes in trade-union organization and the political education of its members and leaders. This is especially true when the labor forces are split, as Labor's Non-Partisan League has learned to its sorrow in several recent state and local elections in America.

In this stage of development labor must work through the established party most favorable to its cause. In America it is no accident that this has been the Democratic Party. For while the Republican Party has been the party of the upper middle class and the capitalists, the Democratic Party has been the party of the lower middle class, with its left wing sympathetic to the industrial worker. In working through the established party, labor must help the liberal forces in it to bring about a

party realignment. The president as party leader can, as in the case of Mr. Roosevelt, have enormous influence in swinging his own party leftward. Every such move makes more possible a temporary working alliance between labor and the lower middle class within the framework of the party. The working alliance may take the form, as in France or Spain, of a united field command of the leaders of existing political groups; or it may take the form, as in America, of the common acceptance of a single leadership. For in a sense, Mr. Roosevelt, *faute de mieux*, has been in himself a Popular Front. Given the late maturing of American labor and its need for meeting urgent political problems without adequate preparation, it must accept such a makeshift until it is able to establish a more dependable working arrangement with the middle-class forces, and one that does not hinge so completely on a single personality.

Second, labor must not sell its birthright for a mess of pottage. It is true that in this stage labor must make political alliances and political bargains, as the experience of the American Labor Party in New York, the Non-Partisan League in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan, and the Farmer-Labor parties in Minnesota and Wisconsin illustrates. That is to say, labor must undertake to play a hard and realistic political game. But in playing politics, labor must be careful not to play the old-line politics. When a bargain reaches the point where, for the sake of immediate political advantage, it strikes at a deeply cherished objective of the labor outlook or endangers a crucial stage in the progress toward socialization, it is no longer a good bargain for labor. We gain very little if we exchange a Democratic Tammany for a labor Tammany.

Third, labor must as soon as possible have a party of its own, which will serve as the political instrument for expressing its objectives and outlook, much as the capitalist and middle-class parties serve a similar function for the other classes. It is not

enough for labor to be treated with political sympathy by the leader of a middle-class party, any more than it is enough for labor to be treated with economic sympathy by a paternalistic employer who refuses to recognize an "outside" union. Thus far the political tendency of the Left in England, France, Spain, Mexico, America, has been toward the creation of an essentially labor party or of a loose political formation in which labor has a decisive voice. This has its difficulties and annoyances, of course, for the non-labor political leaders; and it makes the task of winning any sweeping middle-class support for such a party or combination more arduous.

It was largely with this perspective that in America in the spring of 1938 Governor Philip La Follette launched a National Progressive Party, whose core, ideology, and symbolism were middle-class, but which was willing to include labor groups and leaders if they were willing to go along. What Governor La Follette wished to avoid was any commitments that would tie him to labor and stamp the movement as a labor-party movement or a Popular Front movement. Rightly or not, he may have felt that labor, by its tragic vulnerability to the ravages of fascism, could be counted on to support a relatively progressive party anyway, and that labor could therefore be presented with the *fait accompli*; but that the real task was to woo the middle class away from fascism. Such a view has its persuasiveness. But for labor it contains treacherous pitfalls. For unless the movement toward socialization is shaped to the pattern of labor's outlook and unless it proceeds on the proposition that living standards must be lifted not *for* labor but *by* labor, it has not placed any permanent obstacles in the path of middle-class fascism.

Fourth, the labor party must not be a narrow trade-union party, however, but must have a broad base in middle-class, professional, technical, and intellectual groups as well. No creative party can be based solely upon trade-union experience

and traditions. That is the mistake that the British Labour Party has thus far made, and its present lack of vitality is the price it is paying.

Fifth, an effective labor party is unthinkable unless the labor ranks are unified rather than split behind it. And a creative labor party is improbable unless there is genuine democracy within the units that compose it, from the shop council to the executive board.

If these conditions are fulfilled, labor can place itself at the head of the forces that want to move forward to a functional state. For that, in the broadest and deepest sense, is what labor means and wants. And the leaders of a labor party must make clear to their allies in the middle class that they are not forming the alliance only temporarily, in order to achieve a breathing-spell before they proceed to destroy all the values in an individualist and humanist culture that the middle-class groups care about. They must make it clear that they want the breathing-spell in order to give labor and middle-class groups alike a chance to build a synthesis of the values common to both because they are common to human decency.

## 6. THE END OF THE CRISIS STATE

No discussion of the crisis state can be complete without considering the contention that it can end only in civil war. There are four possible bases for such a contention. One is that the leftist democracy of the crisis state leads naturally and inevitably to revolutionary violence on the part of the workers and their leaders. This is the fascist contention, and it is useful chiefly as the fascist *rationale* for a counter-revolutionary attempt. The second, which is the contention of the

extreme Marxian Left, is that the forces of capitalist collapse are so deep-seated that nothing short of a complete and immediate socialist program can deal with them; and that either Fabian or Popular Front economic measures will be pitifully inadequate to halt the disintegration of capitalism, which can lead only to revolution and civil war. The third is the contention of the political realist who holds that while it is conceivable that capitalist democracy can be kept alive by planning long enough for it to be transformed into a planned socialism, we are almost certain to fail in the attempt: either because the tactic requires a skill that men have not yet evidenced in their political life, or because the accretions of power that the process involves will corrupt and destroy the process itself. The fourth is the contention, again implicit in Marxian thought, that while the democratic forces may be ready and able to effect a transition to a planned socialism without violence, provided that no formidable obstructions are placed in their path, the resistance of the capitalists will inevitably precipitate civil war. This too involves considerations of power urges, not so much on the part of the planners but on the part of the capitalists.

I do not propose to discuss the first two contentions, since my views on them are implicit in what I have written thus far. The last two contentions, however, raise issues that require probing. I prefer to deal with them in the chapter that follows, as part of the discussion of political power, as it shows itself both in the resistance to a program of planned socialization and in the steps necessary to carry through such a program.

Here I want to say only that I do not regard civil war as the inevitable end of the crisis state. It is clearly one of the alternatives that we may incur. But I see nothing inherent in our economic system that will prevent us—if we have the requisite skill and courage—from holding it together long enough for



the process of socialization to be achieved. Nor do I see anything inherent in the political tasks that the crisis state has undertaken that would doom their accomplishment—again if we have the wit and courage.

What remain are the questions that turn not on the essential career of the crisis state but on the essential character of political power. Is there anything inherent in human nature and in the nature of property institutions that would make the capitalists resist the process of socialization, even to the extent of civil war? And is there anything inherent in human nature or in the nature of political power that would make the planners turn into tyrants, once economic control were placed in their hands? It is to these questions—the most searching of any that we have thus far discussed—that we now turn.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER SEVEN

Before the war the dilemma of the crisis state was that it had to transform an economy without revolutionizing it. During the war the dilemma was that it had to use the catchwords of a revolutionary war without daring to confront the realities, that it had to transform an unplanned peace economy into a planned war economy while leaving the basic economic power in the hands of the Old Guard. Thus it is clear that the crisis state was not a pre-war entity that died at Munich, Warsaw, Dunkirk, Pearl Harbor. War did not happen to it. War was an integral part of its career from the beginning.

In these days when the persistent cry is for national unity, my remarks on "The Natural History of Sabotage" may seem unnecessarily harsh. But I do not believe that the war has changed in essentials the pattern of opposition to a militant democracy. The campaign to smash the collective bargaining

position of labor in the defense industries, the attack on the Wage-Hour Act during 1941, the demands that a scorched-earth policy be applied in wartime to the New Deal itself: these are instances that will readily occur to the reader. Even the post-Pearl Harbor cries in the Congressional campaigns to let bygones be bygones and to forget about the dalliance of isolationists and appeasers with Hitler's propaganda pattern are—for all the rhetoric of "national unity" that covers them—part of the new history of sabotage.

There remains the question of the role of labor and of labor parties during and after the war. Labor today seems no nearer than it did five years ago to the formation of its own political party. And its necessary role in wartime of integrating itself wholeheartedly into the war effort strips it of much of its political bargaining position. Moreover, labor has not been trained for either diplomatic or military services, which become the axis of power in a war state. It has no access to commanding positions in either one; nor is it in either one associated in the popular mind with those symbols that carry glamour and inspire confidence. It may in time train itself for these tasks as well as it has in the past two decades trained itself for the economic and administrative posts. Meanwhile it is caught in the difficult position of having to help win the war on terms set by its own antagonists; of having to plead with the capitalists to do their own job well; of having to ask for a voice in the industrial councils not because it has the power to demand it but because it has the experience to add which will keep the job from being botched.

Labor's strength lies in this knowledge of the industrial arts, and in its crucial position in the machine process. It lies also in its ideological appeal to the submerged elements of the world which will one day form the main strength of a world democratic order. It remains to see whether, after the war, these strengths will be enough to save the crisis state.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# POWER IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

1. *Violence and the Transfer of Power*

2. *We Fear What We Must Face*

3. *The Corruption of Power*

4. *On Leadership*

5. *The Necessity of Opposition*

## 1. VIOLENCE AND THE TRANSFER OF POWER

THE question of what violence may lie in store for us in the future rides our thoughts like a nightmare. "Will they fight or will they acquiesce?" we ask. "Will they accept defeat under the rules of the game, or will they scrap the rules?" And the interesting fact is that the "they" no longer refers to the traditional revolutionary parties but to the capitalists. In that fact is implicit the sharp change that has come over the political calculation of our period. We live in an age that may dissolve not by revolutionary violence but by counter-revolutionary. The prospects of violence, aside from war, are conditioned almost solely by the chances of a counter-revolutionary civil struggle.

This is due, as I have suggested in an earlier chapter, to the impact of fascism, which has shifted the offensive from the struggle against capitalism by the Left to the struggle against democracy by the Right. And with it has gone a reorientation of Marxian thought toward the basic concept of violence. For the Marxians history is the record of successive transformations of power, accompanied by a shift of the class relations and of the cultural consciousness that is based on those class relations. The dynamic in this process of history is the class struggle. But among the questions that Marxian theory has never cleared up are the extent to which the transfer of power that results from the class struggle is inherently and inevitably violent, and the

role that the variations and accidents of human effort play in the impersonal sequences of that transfer of power.

The Marxian tradition asserts with considerable finality that there are no instances in history in which a ruling class has given up its power and perquisites without making a fight of it. But there is a happy vagueness as to what induction is to be drawn from that. Does it mean that a non-violent transfer of power is under all circumstances inconceivable? That is the position of the revolutionary Marxian. Does it mean, going even further, that since there is going to be a fight, it is best for the workers to be in a fighting mood; and that the idea of revolutionary violence and its ultimate triumph is in itself an effective myth in giving fire and direction to the revolutionary movement? That is the position of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*, and it is also implicit in the tactic of the syndicalists and the Wobblies. Or does the generalization about the past still leave scope for the attempt to exhaust every other method in effecting a transfer of power before violence is resorted to? That has been the position of the parliamentary Marxians, whether they have called themselves Fabians, as in England, or Social Democrats, as on the Continent.

Fabianism may, of course, be only an excuse for standing still. It may be the rationalization that an inert leadership makes for its cowardice and its willingness at the decisive moment to betray the rank and file; and that is how it has been mainly interpreted in the writings of the revolutionary wing of Marxism. It involves the danger that while the immediate claims are being urged, the larger ones will be lost sight of; and that while parliamentary measures are being pushed, the militancy of the workers is being drained off. The opposite position involves the danger of the glorification of violence, of the premature and adventurist *Putsch*, of the failure to husband the resources of the workers' movement while gaining time for socialization.

There has always been this deep-reaching ambiguity in Marxian thought, which more than anything else has been the occasion if not the cause of its bitter factionalism. The ambiguity may even be found in the thinking of Marx himself; for there were always two Marxes, the revolutionist and the Fabian, each saying to the other with a sharp irony: "*Je ne suis pas marxiste.*"

Those of our generation who care about the heritage of Marxian thought but who have been jolted by the catastrophic movement of events into an attitude of critical scrutiny of it, stand a better chance than any previous generation of resolving the ambiguity I have been discussing. We are in a position to see, if we have the will to see, that on the question of violence both the Fabians and the revolutionists have been looking in the wrong direction. The Fabians have feared what violence on the part of the workers would involve, and have therefore persuaded themselves that the capitalists will acquiesce in the transfer of power if it is carried out gently enough. Their focus, so far as calculations of violence are concerned, has been on the workers. The same has been true of the revolutionists. Lenin, for example, defined a revolutionary situation as one in which the governing class was no longer able to govern, the proletariat no longer willing to be exploited, and the revolutionists possessed of a well-knit and disciplined organization for gaining power. The premises and animus of this analysis exclude the calculation of an effective violent resistance on the part of the governing class, given the revolutionary situation; but even more they exclude the possibility of their taking the initiative in violence.

The succession of fascist coups, the new fascist technique of cutting across national boundaries and stirring up violent resistance to leftist crisis governments, the new insight we have gained into the value and the uses of democracy—these have combined to teach us clearly what we could not have known

before. The problem of the transfer of power, we are learning, is the problem of its transfer from a ruling oligarchy to a democratic majority. And in that transfer the question of violence need enter only in so far as the oligarchs will violently resist the democratic majority; in such an event the violence will have to be met by legal but decisive force.

There is another thing we can see more clearly today than could the generations before us. That is that the prospects of violence cannot be determined with an emphatic certainty either way. It is not a matter of certainty that the transfer of power (which in itself is ultimately unavoidable) will take place violently; or non-violently either. It is a matter of a calculus of probabilities. There is no iron law of history that applies here. There are only guesses that depend on a number of variables. The four biggest variables that I want to consider are the national character and traditions, the strength of the capitalist class, the prestige of fascism and the moral standing of violence in the world context, and finally the skill shown in attempting the task of the peaceful transfer of power.

In terms of national character and traditions, America is in a peculiar position. On the one hand we are the most violent people in the world. We pay lip-service to a tradition of law and order, but that is mainly so as to have the greater ease of conscience in violating laws and flouting order. From the time that we liquidated the Indians and took their land away from them, up to the latest gang-murder in this morning's newspaper, the history of our country is the record of an exuberant and swashbuckling violence. The opening of our continent and the spoliation of its resources under the spur of profit and in the name of a competitive capitalism have been the essence of recklessness and social waste. In our labor struggles there has been vigor aplenty on both sides. Our radical movements, except in the Revolution itself, have never ex-

hibited a capacity for sustained violence on the European pattern; they have shown rather what may be called a twenty-four-hour violence, as in the case of some of our "farm holiday" activities. And while our capitalists have also, as yet, not operated on the European fascist pattern, they have shown ample knowledge of how to make use of the American vigilante tradition in strike-smashing and terrorism.

The other side of the shield is the strong civil-liberties tradition in America, present also in England and France but lacking in the Germany and Austria that succumbed to Hitler. In so far as that tradition has genuine fire in it and is not simply a formal legalism, its importance lies mainly in its effect upon the middle class. For the middle class is likely to support a legal government whose existence is threatened by the drastic and systematic violation of civil liberties by a fascist-capitalist thrust. In America this may weight the balance heavily against violence from the Right, and may aid the legal process of socialization by a democratic majority.

This brings us to the second variable—the strength of the capitalist class and its opportunity to use that strength with a decisive violence. One reason why classic Marxism tended to hold that the thrust to gain power would have to come from the Left was its assumption that the state was the pliant instrument of the capitalists—in Marx's terms, "the executive committee of the bourgeoisie." But the democratic crisis governments, and outstandingly the Roosevelt government in America, have taught us that, whether or not this description is true in long-run historical terms, it is certainly not very useful in our own time. To call the New Deal administration or even the Popular Front government in France the executive committee of the bourgeoisie would have a cruelly ironic ring to the bourgeoisie themselves. The crisis state has become to a striking degree the instrument of the democratic majority, and it is likely to become increasingly so in the more mature phases



of the transition to socialism. The dominant economic oligarchy whose methods I have described in an earlier chapter is forced to its extreme efforts toward sabotaging the crisis government for the very reason that the government is not its own.

In the case of an oligarchy of great strength, as in America or Great Britain, this capacity for sabotage is incalculable. One would have to be a light-hearted as well as a tender-minded optimist to write off completely its ultimate capacity to smash democratic government through violence if necessary. Already in America and in France there have been sporadic kindlings of the fascist flame. Already there have been in each country adventurers who have made a bid for the leadership around which the fascist forces could rally with capitalist support.

Yet America has one great advantage over the other countries in its sprawling regionalism. Thus far the fascist beginnings in America, where they have not grown out of the widespread corporate tyranny and terrorism, have been local outcroppings: Jersey City, Dearborn, Boston, Kansas City, Louisiana, Florida, California. These are instances of regional fascism, but they do not add up to national fascism. America has too many centers that capitalist violence would have to lay siege to and capture. The capitalists are in the position of the king whose sadistic desire it was that the necks of his rebellious subjects could be merged in a single neck for him to chop at.

The third variable that we must take account of is the world prestige of fascism and the place of violence in the contemporary ethic. So long as the fascist ruling groups are able to point not only to trains that run on time, but even more to minds that never for once are allowed to depart from the grooves hollowed out for them by the state, so long will fascism seem a golden realm into which our own economic oligarchs will seek to enter even by violence. So long as the fascist ruling groups are able to point to "solutions" of the labor problem

through a dissolution of trade unions, and of the problem of unemployment through the ousting of part of the surplus population from the country and the conscription of the rest for war industries; so long as they can point to diplomatic triumphs achieved by equipping governments with the ethics of armored tanks: so long will the capitalists in the crisis democracies feel emboldened to rid themselves of their own troubles in similar fashion.

And not only the capitalists. Their violence can have no hope of being effective without the middle class. And the middle-class mind is singularly permeable to what seem to be successful going concerns. If international violence continues its career of triumph, as it has done in the past five years, the scruples that the middle class may feel toward a violent fascist coup subsidized by the capitalists will have been whittled away. But an effective *cordon sanitaire* thrown around the fascist powers in order to keep this international violence in check can be one of the strongest insurances that our own efforts to move toward a democratic humanist society will not effectively be resisted by the final sabotage of civil war.

Ultimately, however, the most important variable of all is the skill and courage and sustained energy with which we approach our task in this transition period. That applies in the area of economic organization and administrative control; it applies in the area of political strategy; it applies in the area of popular opinion; it applies in the area of foreign policy. All too often, however, we tend to equate skill of this sort with watchful waiting so careful that it becomes cowardly. We must make it clear that the democratic majority cannot afford to precipitate violence. But it must be made equally clear that if violence is thrust upon a democratic government by the oligarchs and their fascist accomplices, that government must act with decisiveness and with a measure of force limited not by fear but only by the mandate of the people. There is a vast

difference between the creative political imagination that seeks ways to avoid violence in the transfer of power, and the wishful thinking that continues to believe to the bitter end that the capitalists will acquiesce, and therefore takes no measures to meet the contingency that they will not.

I have discussed only four important variables. There are many others I shall not discuss—so many that it would be foolhardy to answer with any degree of finality the question whether the capitalists will acquiesce. One can only say, in terms of our capacity to understand all the relevant factors that will influence their decision, that the balance of probabilities points to their refusing to acquiesce. The chances are they will fight, that the sequence of sabotaging acts I have discussed earlier will be projected to its logical conclusion of civil struggle. We must continue to work for a solution that does not involve civil struggle. But we must be prepared ultimately to face the other and more probable alternative. And the important thing is that to face it involves no deviation from the democratic processes that are inherent in the whole attempt at a peaceful transition.

If the violence comes it is unlikely, in a country like America, that it will come in the earlier stages of the democratic crisis state. The talk about marching on Washington, in the early days of the New Deal administration, was wild talk: even the definite offer made to General Smedley Butler by a group of Wall Street extremists to head such a march of Legionnaires was, like the talk of assassinating the president, little more than the expression of frantic hatred on the part of a small group. In a country like Spain or even France, close to the centers of fascism and vital to the fascist aims of expansion, violence may be expected from the capitalists even in the relatively early stages of socialization. But in America it is more likely that the capitalists will not resort to the last desperate

expedient until they have exhausted other forms of sabotage; and then only in the later stages of the transition period when the threat is clearly one of socialism, and only when the chances of carrying the middle class along on such a desperate venture seem good.

This is not the place to discuss the methods of meeting such an attempt. One can say only that a government that does not in this kind of emergency act decisively to control the army, the National Guard, the police force, and the radio, and to deal severely with treason, is a government that is already lost before the first shot is fired or the first dynamo switch pulled. The force of the attack, in a fully developed capitalist country like France or Great Britain or America, will be immeasurably greater than it was in Spain. Yet even in Spain the situation seemed lost for the government forces until the formation of the Negrin cabinet, which had the will to act decisively. In the more fully developed and more delicately organized economic structures, a government will have to show that sort of firmness at the very beginning or else sign its own death warrant.

But a government that fails to meet such a threat is doing more than committing suicide. It is betraying the whole movement toward a more humane and more rational society. The essence of the peaceful progress of the crisis state toward social stability is legality coupled with an unalterable firmness. Force in pursuance of illegal objectives must in the end defeat itself; for you cannot suspend the democratic ethic in a civil struggle and hope to resume it again afterward. But legality without the full force that is compatible with it is futile. When Hitler seized power from the German republic, the Social Democratic officials who were visited by Nazi storm troopers and asked to yield up their office, did so: their only concern was that it should be known that they had been confronted by a show of force before surrendering. In that single fact is summed up the

doom not only of German Social Democracy but of the German people and German culture.

## 2 . W E F E A R W H A T W E M U S T F A C E

It would seem relatively easy to unite the vast majority of men of good will under a banner of legality and firmness; especially if it be in defense of an advancing social order against the violence offered by the forces of social injustice and economic inequality. Yet it is by no means easy; and one of the principal obstacles is that men of good will are growing to fear governmental power almost as much as they fear extra-governmental violence.

The sources of this fear are not difficult to find. Outwardly at any rate it relates to the impact that the fascist excesses and the revelations of the Russian trials of political offenders have had on our consciousness. The inhumanity of fascism has shed a new light on man as a political animal; and the entrenchment of the Communist Party leadership in power in the Soviet Union, forcing the opposition to express itself through the channels of sabotage and treason, has produced in us a sharp disenchantment with proletarian dictatorship.

More deeply and obscurely, however, one may guess that our distrust of power is the expression of our bewilderment amidst the turmoil of the time. Because the old landmarks are gone by which we once judged the path of social advance, and because what lies at the end of the various paths that stretch before us seems treacherous and uncertain, we have come to distrust all roads and finally to fear the journey of politics in itself. And yet, unless one embraces some notion of philosophical anarchism, there can be no doubt that govern-

mental power is a necessary and neutral instrument—a road that may lead in directions that may be good or bad but that is in itself neither good nor bad, a weapon that may be used for destruction or defense depending on who wields it or how it is wielded. Power, in short, is what you make it.

Such a notion of power, which would seem a realistic and operational one, is, however, not the notion that holds sway over our minds. Instead, we tend to think of power as a disease, a cancerous growth whose cells multiply without any relevance to the needs and functions of the body politic. It is in essence the old eighteenth-century notion of John Locke's school, cropping up again in a new setting and with greater force, that all government is malignant.

Many thoughtful and realistic men hold to this view. They fear for the results if we seek to achieve desirable social ends by an extension of the province of government; it raises, for them, the problem I have mentioned in an earlier chapter, the problem of means and ends. They sweat in agony over the growth of a bureaucracy in America; it suggests the powerful party bureaucracies that dominate, in different ways, the Soviet Union and Germany. They scrutinize every new extension of power carefully, to see to what tyrannies it may conceivably lead if pushed far enough. They associate power with the doctrine of Original Sin. The process of government must, for them, be washed in the blood of the sacrificial lamb before it can be washed clean of this taint.

This obsession with power has had an enormous effect upon the political theory of today. In fact, it may be said to have produced a Copernican turn in our political thinking—a shift of axis from the dynamics of government to the nature and consequences of power. It is not too much to say that power has come to hold the center of our preoccupation not only with politics, but with ethics as well. Not only is tyranny feared for its impact on those governed; it is feared also because of

its possible impact on those governing—for its corrupting force.

“Power always corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”—that aphorism of Lord Acton is coming to be the motto of our time, especially among liberals. The corruption that we fear is partly the subtle corruption of the moral sense and of self-restraint; it is also the auto-intoxication with power, the heady sense that (we say) makes men who hold power seek to perpetuate their hold upon it through any means. We believe that there is somehow an autonomous and inherent principle of growth in the tenure of power, and moreover an inevitable one. Our attitude toward it is essentially theological; and it is significant that it should be the aphorism of a congenitally religious mind that we quote, for what we resent and fear about power is that it allows men to usurp the godlike function of deciding the destinies of other men, the only restraint upon them (to paraphrase Justice Stone) being their self-restraint.

Is it true that power corrupts, necessarily and inherently? To me, that is only a half-truth, and today much the less important half. There can be no doubt that power may be poorly organized, that there may be insufficient safeguards against its exercise and abuse. There is certainly no insurance that power directed toward socially desirable ends will be kept from becoming tyrannical. These truths are clear and undeniable. But there are other truths as well against which they must be balanced: That power is responsibility, and as such it may have a maturing and sobering effect. That there must be a coercive element in government if it is not to be anarchic. That to distrust and fear power is to distrust and fear the whole intrinsic process of government, since government differs from other phases of the community in that it takes those other phases of the community and organizes them in terms of power. That there has never been anything accomplished representing an advance that was not finally embodied in some form of power. And that, especially in a period like ours, when we are striving

desperately for sheer survival in the face of economic collapse and social chaos and the brutally organized violence of the vested interests, the exercise of governmental power is necessary as a condition of survival.

Actually the most damning thing about the current attitude toward power is that it shows that we have no confidence in the human being as such—not even in ourselves. True, there is such a thing as having a fanatic's faith in the rightness of one's own cause—such a thing as equating one's own illusions with godlike certitudes, and then marching through seas of blood to achieve those illusions. But there is another kind of confidence as well—the confidence in social aims that are rooted in the needs of the people, that arise from their spontaneous aspirations, that have the support of their suffrage and represent their will. When, because of our fear of power, we fall back paralyzed at the very moment when those aims are threatened; when we fear to organize our aims in the form of governmental action and even coercion, then we are betraying a negativism and fear about ourselves as human beings that will lead only to the destruction of what we cherish.

There is an enormous difference between political power when it is personal, tyrannical, unchecked, and political power when it is democratically arrived at and democratically controlled. But once you have democratic power, it is as fatal to fear to exert it to the full as the same fear would be fatal for the absolutist. Only in the latter case merely his own survival is involved, and in the former the survival of a people and a culture.

The interesting thing is that thus to distrust our own use of political power is by implication to give free rein to other forms of power that are not ours, and which, not being political, are more subtly coercive than the extensions of governmental power that we fear. For, with our weakness for labels, we tend



to put our emphasis on the forms rather than the actualities of power. Thurman Arnold has observed, quite rightly, that it is part of the folklore of a capitalist culture to protest against taxation by the government, yet to submit to just as drastic a levy by the corporations in the form of monopoly prices. This observation could be extended to the whole sphere of power. Actually the coercions that we submit to because they are embodied in economic and social institutions are far more pervasive and far more drastic than any coercions on the part of a democratic government. The jobs we have, the flats and apartments we live in, the prices we pay, the values we receive, our livelihood and security are all today subject to the vast corporate empire of capitalism. The necessities and amenities of life, what we need to sustain ourselves and what we need to amuse ourselves—even the ideas that we think with, like the newspapers that we read and the radios that we listen to—are part of this empire. Yet we do not fear these as forms of power imposed upon us, because we accept them as part of the habitual pattern of our lives. In fact, many of the most coercive elements in government—such as the laws to ensure schooling, to enforce sanitation, to conscript soldiers—we have also come to accept after a struggle as part of the habitual pattern of our lives.

What we fear is what is not habitual. When the problem is posed of taking the vast power that the corporations today exercise in an undisciplined and unacknowledged fashion over the outlines of our lives, and of transferring that power to the government, we shrink back in fear. Planning is regimentation, we say. No body of men should be entrusted with the power of making decisions that affect the sacred economic sphere of our lives. But the fact is that we have already entrusted those decisions and that power to a body of men—to the unacknowledged rulers of our economic destinies. We have never recognized it as a form of power, reserving that term for the crystal-

lized governmental forms only. Now when we are called upon to extend the province of government into the economic domain, and to transfer the control from the oligarchs to ourselves, we recognize it for the first time for what it is. The fact that in the act of making the transfer we have come to recognize the true implications of power in economic institutions may turn out to be one of the biggest social gains of the whole transition period.

But it will be a gain on which we may never capitalize unless we learn to consolidate and safeguard the power that is being transferred. For we can establish democratic control of our industrial life only by a quiet but none the less firm insistence upon the power of a democracy to rule its own economic destinies. That means we must use the governmental power we already have in gaining more.

It is as bare as that. Yet there is no other way, unless we are willing to surrender even the democratic forms that we now have, and yield the province that the democratic government now occupies. The strength of the oligarchs is so encrusted in our economy, that only a firm use of governmental power will avail us in fighting their sabotage. If any of us think that we can maintain the *status quo*, that is an illusion. The organization of our economic life is collapsing so long as it is uncontrolled by the community acting through its government. The real question, as I have pointed out before, is not whether the province of government shall be extended, but whether it shall be extended by the majority or the minority; whether it shall be extended through democratic procedures, safeguarded by the popular consciousness of its possibilities and dangers, or through the extension of corporate control until the corporate economy becomes the corporate state.

The Soviet experience is, of course, most present in our minds as to the danger of extending the power of the government into the sphere of planning. But the Soviet experience

must not be generalized. What has happened in Russia, with respect to the abuse of power, is to a large degree inherent not in planning but in the pre-revolutionary Russian experience, and in the nature of the Russian Revolution. Government power had been, during the whole Tsarist regime, part of the habitual pattern of the culture as it is not in our culture. And because it had been part of that habitual pattern, there was not the same vigilance that we feel about creating safeguards against the abuse and corruption of power. The Russian Revolution involved, moreover, in its nature, so sharp and sudden a transfer of power that even if the habit-patterns that accepted the lack of safeguards had not been there, it would still have been difficult to create the safeguards.

In these facts lies the enormous advantage that the democratic crisis state has over the feudal-capitalist state in its transfer of power. What the Russian experience should do is not to make us condemn out of hand the extension of government power into the sphere of economic planning. That, as I have said, is an imperative that we must under any circumstances accept and work with. The Russian experience is valuable because it underscores for us what we might otherwise have neglected: the great need for making certain that the base of power is democratically sound, that the ways in which it is organized will not perpetuate the leadership nor stifle the opposition nor corrupt the planners themselves. The study of such concrete safeguards will get us a good deal farther than vast generalizations about the nature and evils of power.

One word more, however, about power itself, and the fear of it. The Freudians have taught us that the individual flees from what he unconsciously fears; and that he fears it because he has not learned to confront its burdens and implications. We fear what we must face: that is the core of individual mental sickness. We must face what we fear: that is the core

of the restoration of health. We know these things. We know what is healthy for the individual. Yet we do not apply our knowledge to the social health. Power is not an evil. Power is the sum and summit of our political task—perhaps the greatest political task that a generation has had to meet. There are all sorts of hidden dangers, great risks, enormous social difficulties in that task—so many that there is a temptation for us to escape the whole intolerable burden of the social task itself by projecting our fears about it into the realm of power. Power, its dangers and corruptions, becomes the symbol of our fear and the symbol of our escape. Once we confront it we shall have taken the greatest step toward political maturity and social health.

I do not want to magnify the importance of power in our total social problem and its solutions. Power is not bread or meat; it is not culture; it is not life or the ideas that sustain life. We cannot live by power, and a culture that seeks to live by it becomes brutal and sterile. But we can die without it. The values that give life its nourishment are the humanist values, and I want to discuss them in the next chapter. But it is the community's use of its own power, and its clear confronting of what is involved in that use, that must clear the path of whatever obstacles stand in the way of working for those humanist values.

### 3 . THE CORRUPTION OF POWER

We shall not get very far in our understanding of power by dealing with absolutes on it. If power corrupts, it is because of very specific reasons present in a particular cultural context, and not because of any universals either about power or about

human nature. In a capitalist democracy like America, power has had a corrosive effect for two principal reasons. The first is that the effective power in our social system has been only formally in our public officials. The real power is the economic power in the hands of the oligarchs. But since they have had to square their power with democratic forms, they have been forced to use stratagem, guile, and bribery to maintain their control over the people's officials. This compulsive in their position has corrupted them, as they have corrupted our political machines and bosses.

The second, and complementary, reason must be viewed from the standpoint of our public officials. Like the labor leaders who have become racketeers in a racketeering society, and the artists who have become charlatans in a world of salesmanship, so the politicians reveal the stamp of a pecuniary society. I am not speaking only of the morally open and flagrant, if physically subterranean, corruption that inevitably taints political power in a society where values are intangible unless they are vendible. I am speaking much more of the subtler corruption of power that flows from the fact that, in a society whose basic services are organized for individual and not for social ends, the prestige values do not lie in political life. That is one important reason why in America the "good" people have not gone into politics. The worst corruption of power is the spiritual starvation that results when those who formally hold power are cut off from the creative energies of the culture.

The sources of the corruption of power in a fascist social system are another matter. Fascism still retains the capitalist structure; but the whole ethos of capitalism is converted from the vendible to the brutal, from the competitive to the totalitarian. One source of the corrupting effect of power in a fascist state lies in the rejection by fascist thought of all humanist values. Through the completeness of the negation of these

humanist values, those in the strategic fascist posts are forced to turn in on themselves. As if to emphasize their rejection of the effeminate elements in whatever decency men have shown to men in the past, they have to grow brutal and sadistic. And the very sharpness with which the fascists have cut themselves off from the cultural continuities of the past, releases those inhibitions that alone make any form of power tolerable, whether political, economic, or personal. It is significant that in a fascist society, even the non-political forms of power, if one may speak of them as such—the power of employer over worker, of husband over wife, of parent over child—take on the color of the political forms. Yet it is perhaps untrue to speak of non-political forms of power in a fascist society, for it is of the essence of such a society to subordinate everything else to the clamorous state.

This cult of the state is the second source of the corrupting effect of fascist power. To elevate the state until it becomes the capstone of the social structure, as the Greeks did in Periclean Athens, is one thing. The fascist cult is quite another. For the fascist state is seen not as expressing the cultural values of the community, but as alone and in itself giving meaning to the community's other activities. Instead of the state's being broadened to embrace the community, the community is narrowed to fit the needs of the state. The archetype, it is almost too obvious to say, is not the broad state humanism of Athens, but the narrow and intense praetorianism of Sparta. As in Sparta, so in Germany the corruption of power flows from the cultural impoverishment of the community; and the political forms that it takes are dictated by the necessity of maintaining a praetorian regime in the midst of a hostile subject population.

The corruption of power in the Soviet communist state shares some traits with that of the fascist states. In fact, it is in terms of the organization of power, and not in terms either of economic objectives or of cultural values, that some sub-

stance is given to the current effort to equate communism and fascism, and dismiss it with an equi-balanced "plague on both your houses." Yet while there is a basis for the comparison because of the specific ways in which the Soviets organize their power—the cult of the leader, the suppression of the opposition, the prestige of the political in life, the control over the channels of opinion—it is a semi-truth which is far more false than true. We gain nothing by this easy identification of a socialist regime with a fascist—nothing, that is to say, in clarity of thinking, whatever the oligarchs may gain in strategic values in fighting socialization at home.

The organization of power and the failure to provide proper safeguards against its abuse are the greatest weakness of the socialist regime as we have thus far seen it operating in the Soviet Union. I have been concerned time and time again in this book to make that clear. But we must see those deficiencies in terms of a socialist society, and not of a fascist or capitalist society. The diseases of Soviet power come from the fact that a sharp revolution from the Left effected too quick a transfer of power from one class to another. Part of the revolutionary process lay in the rejection of the lenient and tolerant spirit as being too frail a flower to grow in the hardy soil of proletarian revolution. This rejection has left its mark on the Soviet state ever since. It has been especially strong because of the recency of feudalism in Russia and the habituation of the people to the power-rigidities of a system of status.

What we have learned from Russia is that a violent revolutionary movement, to be successful, has to develop a tactic and an ethic that may be effective for the revolutionary period and the period of civil struggle, but that are difficult to slough off in the later periods of relative peace and stability. When the encirclement of the new regime by the hostility of foreign powers continues, the emergency tension that generated the absolutism of power serves to justify its continuance—at least

in the minds of the leaders and, no doubt, of the vast majority of the people.

Yet it is easy to overemphasize these diseases of power in the planned state, and to fail to see them in perspective. In the first place, much that applies to Russia is uniquely characteristic of Russian history and the Russian tradition, and need not be repeated in other socialist efforts. But the perspectives I speak of lie partly in the nature of power itself. Men do not seek power for itself, but only because of the values of prestige, enlargement of stature, sense of importance, that it gives. Power is the strategic capacity for levying upon the obedience and respect of others. When a society, as in a capitalist democracy, offers men these values of prestige, obedience, respect, enlargement of stature, sense of importance, in other walks of life than the governmental, the pressure to perpetuate governmental tenure of power is not so great. There are, if you choose to call it that, other forms of power than the political: other forms offering greater values of prestige, stature, obedience. Such a situation serves to distribute the risk, but it also serves to dissipate the possible social gain. What the process of socialization does is to effect a shift of the axis of the pursuit of power. The more that social activities are directed toward social ends, the more is the pursuit of prestige, importance, stature, withdrawn from the non-governmental (mainly economic) channels and drained into the governmental. This makes for a concentration of men's personal claims to stature, and therefore a concentration of danger. But it makes also for a concentration of social responsibility. For the energy that goes into the claims to stature is now an energy that may be potentially directed to the service of the whole community instead of to the expansion of private fortunes and the construction of huge corporate edifices.

Whether the responsibility outweighs the danger depends not so much on the nature of the human animal or some



intrinsic quality in power itself, as on the concrete ways in which that responsibility is organized. I want to discuss now two of those problems of organization: leadership in a planned society or in a society moving toward planning, and the channeling of opposition sentiment.

#### 4 . O N L E A D E R S H I P

If socialism has taught us the meaning of planning and made us rethink our notions of it, fascism has made us rethink our notions of leadership. The spectacle of the *Führerprinzip* in action in the Nazi polity and in Nazi industry is enough to dampen the enthusiasm of those of us who used to clamor for "leadership" as the way out of our crisis. It has given leadership new and sinister implications. It has thereby seriously crippled commencement addresses, Sunday sermons, and morning editorials.

Actually, despite the rhetoric we have used about it in our occasional utterances, the concept of leadership has never taken deep root in the American mind, nor indeed in any of the capitalist democracies. In the past we have emphasized not leadership, but wealth and success; not the individual persuading or guiding his fellows or even shaping them to his purposes, but the individual in competition with his fellows and gaining his prestige by transcending them. Whatever clamor there has been among us for the great leader, to unify us and lead us out of the wilderness, has come in the present time of troubles. And it has been not so much a desire for leadership as a despair of democracy and of collective effort in solving its problems. At other times the only use we have had

for the term "leader" in our everyday vocabulary has been in the argot of machine politics.

For the fact is that leadership is too social a concept to be fully at ease in an individualistic society. To have great and mature leaders, a culture must have great and mature followers. Great leadership is possible where the collective sense is developed or is in process of development; or, in an individualistic culture, at the moments of intense crisis which burns away the discordant elements and fuses individuals for the moment into a collectivity.

The fascists in Germany and Italy, and the incipient fascists in the capitalist democracies, regard a leader as someone who tells you what to do and think. But this is a torso of a concept, without limbs or spirit or brain. A leader is only in part the will that galvanizes a people. There are other phases to him. He is the product of the people, drawing from them the sustenance of his striving. He is the interpreter of the people, clarifying their aims. He is the tactician of the people, telling them what to do to attain their aims. He is the symbol of the people, summing up their sense of greatness and heroism, making up as a symbol for their unconscious feeling of deficiencies, giving them as a symbol an altar for secular worship.

We shall be doing ourselves a disservice if we reject out of hand the concept of the leader because of the fascist taint that it now bears, or because of our fear of the power that leadership carries with it. Every decisive group effort needs leadership. The important thing is that the leadership should take the shape and character of the group effort, instead of distorting it. A democratic collectivism will have more room and more need for the leader than an unplanned capitalism. But the only leadership it can use is a democratic leadership that is a response to the creative energies of the people fully as much as it evokes them.

There is no fear of our not having these energies, and the resources of leadership. In fact, a culture is not a sound one unless it develops more leadership than it can use. The Carlylean notion of the leader as the God in the car, the divine messenger bearing the unmistakable afflatus, is somewhat more than nine-tenths poppycock. Leadership comes not from heaven, like manna, but out of the culture, like all secular things. Every drastic social change, every revolution, develops unsuspected powers of leadership among the masses themselves. Revolutions are made and broken by these nameless leaders—the village Hampdens, the Russian peasants who became Chapayevs, the German sailors and workers who took things in their own hands in 1918 and might have built a new Germany if the formal “leaders”—the Noskes and Eberts—had not taken over. And if a culture has even among its common people resources of this sort, it should not lack for leaders at the top to fulfill its purposes.

That is why we must rid ourselves of the notion that any one man is indispensable. He may be so during a short and sharp crisis period: Lenin was wellnigh indispensable during the revolution and the early days of the civil war. But for the long pull a culture or a cause is badly off if it has only one leader on whom it can depend, and if with him and him alone it survives or falls.

The problem is raised today in an acute form by the question of a third term for President Roosevelt. I leave out of consideration the two-term precedent. A careful historical examination reveals that in each instance where a president in the past refused a third term, there was a pragmatic reason. The precedent has value as such only if there is a genuine social rationale behind it. If so, it is better to consider the *rationale* directly.

The best reason for denying a third term to a president is the one we have been discussing: that the premise that only

one man can save a country or a cause is a dangerous premise. It would not be difficult to name a half-dozen New Dealers today who would make excellent Chief Executives—in clarity of purpose, in courage, in social consciousness, in administrative ability. The rub is that it is difficult to find someone with these qualities who is also as good a strategist as Mr. Roosevelt. And the even greater rub lies in finding someone who is as good a symbol for what the New Deal means to the common man. The career of a reform government in a crisis democracy is so precarious, the task of keeping its scattered forces united and its energies sustained is so difficult, that a diminution of strength on the part of its leader might conceivably prove the decisive factor in the collapse of the whole reform effort, and even in the struggle against fascism. At any rate, that is how the proponents of the third term reason. And their reasoning will have cogency in the event of a strong reactionary threat in America, or the existence of another world war at the time of the election. But such pragmatic considerations would have to be extremely urgent in order to nullify the general proposition we have set down: that a cause is not safe if it rests on the leadership of a single man.

The clinging of the progressive forces in America to President Roosevelt as a leader-symbol is significant. It is the symbolic value of the leader that is the outstanding fact about leadership in the modern world. This has reached its highest development, as might be expected, in the fascist regimes. For the psychic need of a leader-symbol betrays weaknesses or insecurity in the structure of society and the minds of the people. But the leader-symbolism has also reached a high stage of development in the capitalist democracies and especially in the Soviet Union. Attempts have been made in the latter instance to explain it in terms of the Russian ikon tradition and the peasants' centuries-old reverence for the "Little Father." But neither of these is more than marginally suggestive. The

reason for the adulation of Stalin and the devotion to him must be sought rather in the drastic character of the social changes in the Soviet Union, the continued dangers that the regime faces, and the impossibility for the mind of the common man to compass either the achievement or the defense against the danger except by personalizing them in the symbol of the leader. Much the same applies, although to a lesser degree, in the crisis democracies. While the leaders and the administrators are working out the complicated problems of economic control, involving changes of pace and shifts of direction, the people must move in unison with them. It is difficult, often impossible, to explain the reasons to them; even if it were possible, it would be confusing. Hence the leader-symbol: to bridge the gap between the needs of the state and the condition of political education.

But what we fear most about leadership today is not its symbolic force but its tendency to perpetuate itself in power. There is no way of meeting this threat except by establishing safeguards against it in the form of a strong and active opposition group, and never allowing it to be suppressed. A single-party system, such as under the fascist regimes and in the Soviet Union, will almost inevitably lead to long and sustained tenure of power on the part of the party chief, unchallenged by a critical opposition. It is to this problem that we now turn.

## 5. THE NECESSITY OF OPPOSITION

The eighteenth-century political theorists, writing in the shadow of absolute monarchy, had the same psychosis about governmental power that we have, writing in the shadow of totalitarian regimes. The safeguards they sought against tyr-

anny and the corruption of power were safeguards within the structure of government: they lay in the conception, which we associate with the names of Locke, Montesquieu, and Madison, of a government of limited powers, carefully apportioned among various agencies and so arranged as to check each other. Given the prevailing agrarian and relatively simple industrial economics of the day, this view was right. For the burden that government had to carry was not a great burden, and the price in efficiency that had to be paid for the limitation of power was not too heavy.

But a similar solution is impossible for our crisis democracies. To shy clear of governmental power wholly, or to split it and create endless checks upon it, means a heavy toll on efficiency. It may mean the difference between national collapse and national survival. Germany and Italy have sought to solve the problem by completely rejecting the doctrine of limited governmental powers, and by going to the opposite extreme and establishing a totalitarian state under an unquestioned single leadership. The capitalist democracies are still torn between Locke and Hitler. The Soviet Union has rejected the eighteenth-century doctrine as completely as have the fascist states, and has established an absolute government under the domination of a single party and its leadership.

The solution, so far as the planned democratic states of the future are concerned, lies in a direction where it has not yet been sought. We must release ourselves from the eighteenth-century doctrine to the extent of accepting the necessity of a government with full powers. Instead of the principle of the separation of powers, which is one of ensuring against something, our principle must be that of the articulation of powers, which is aimed at getting things done. Our insurance against tyranny must be placed not on mechanisms within the government but squarely on the party system.

The eighteenth-century theorists were so absorbed with the

mechanisms of government that they tended to ignore the party system. The American founders, for example, framed their government without taking parties into account. They probably expected that there would be a succession of generally acknowledged leaders; and while they were aware of the bitter history of parties in England, they hoped that similar controversies could be avoided in America. The *Federalist*, which was the governmental organ of the day, even warned the people against what it called "faction" and what we should today call the party system.

This indicates how great a change has since occurred in the political climate. It is curious that the desire to avoid faction, which underlay the attitude of the framers of the constitution, should also be the desire of the fascist and communist states today. In fact, this dread of an opposition group serves more than anything else as common ground for such disparate social systems as Germany and the Soviet Union. Both regimes have stamped out opposition. Both regimes are run under a single-party system which allows no effective expression to variants of political thought. In their desire to make a unity of their government, they have gone to the length of making the party system merely an arm of the government—or perhaps, which is even more sinister, making the government merely an arm of the single-party system. The party system is the last place in the world where anyone with democratic aims would want uniformity.

We are shocked at this stamping out of opposition. Yet the shock should not exempt us from seeking to understand the courses from which the single-party systems flow. Any revolutionary effort carried out by a minority revolutionary group tends toward the totalitarian habit of mind. This is due to the urgency of the revolutionary effort, the resistances that it has to meet and overcome, the fierce sense of unity through uniformity that it engenders. The ironic thing is that, since the

revolutionary movement has to be built up within the framework of party government, it is the party that becomes its nucleus. Everything is seen in terms of the party. It is from the party that the new state takes its formation; and, since so many fierce loyalties have grown up around the party, it is a not unnatural corollary that no other parties are allowed.

The single-party systems, despite their rejection of opposition parties, still cling to parliamentary forms to the extent of finding it necessary to show their majorities through electoral methods. The plebiscites which have become one of the characteristic Hitler techniques are loaded from the start. They are in no sense true elections. No choices are offered. There is only the choice of voting *Ja* or *Nein* to an accomplished political fact, although the votes are counted and may be rejected by the same force that controls the state power, and although to vote *Nein* is not only a futile gesture but may be even a suicidal one.

We may ask why these elections are held. Largely, the answer is, to rationalize the absence of a party opposition. For if the majorities are so huge as to make divergences of opinion non-existent, then there is no opposition; and if there is no opposition, there is no need for an opposition party. Partly also, in order to appeal to foreign opinion. For the truth is that in the absence of an internal opposition, the real opposition and the real criticism of a single-party regime come from the outside. And finally, in order to create a sense of complete national unity. The bandwagon appeal is always a powerful one. When a nation sees itself acting together, emerging doubts are the more easily stifled. To the totalitarian unity of the state and its army are thus added not only the totalitarian uniformity of the party system, but also the real or induced unanimity of the people. That is the new trinity of absolute power.

There are, of course, differences within single-party systems. Even on this score the current tendency to identify the Soviet



system with the fascist regimes is unfair. What they have in common is a formal similarity in the party as the steel frame of political society. What they have in common also is the suppression of opposition thought. But here the similarity ends. The driving need for suppression in the case of the fascist regimes is the economic tyranny of the ruling group over the subject majority. The failure to distribute the increases in national income to the workers, and the restrictions imposed even on the middle class and a large part of business, produce the real danger of a challenge to the ruling group. From this fact, and from the integral need of the regime for imperialistic expansion and hence for military power, arises the need for totalitarianism.

In the Soviet Union the case is different. A socialist economy has been established. The business groups and the middle class no longer exist as appreciable forces. The state is a workers' state, and the increases in national income go in overwhelming measure to swell the workers' standard of living. The suppression of opposition flows partly from the challenge to the dominant party leadership by other groups in the revolutionary tradition who are in the party and the government only because there is no room provided for them outside. It flows also from the fear of external invasion—a very real fear, given fascist imperialism—and from the activity of fascist spies. But all this is magnified by the desire of the party bureaucracy to perpetuate its power.

But whatever the sources of the single-party system, its consequences are clear. First, it means the perpetuation of the power of the party leadership. Secondly, it means the suppression of opposition opinion to the point where it has to find outlet in sabotage, treason, and the threat of revolt. And this leads to periodic party tension, to the necessity for a powerful secret police, to more or less bloody purges, to the weakening of individual initiative in industry and the government services,

to the fear of assuming responsibility either in action or in ideas.

A democratic collectivism does not have to incur these dangers. The tradition of emphasis upon the two-party and multi-party system, the acceptance of the necessity for an opposition—in England, the Opposition leader in Parliament is even paid by the government—these elements must be cherished whatever governmental changes may lie in the future. If also we can avoid the psychology of the revolutionary minority party, with its bitterness, its conspiratorial habits, its tendency to breed ever new extremisms which cannot be satisfied by any sort of new regime, then we do not have to fear a repetition of the single-party pattern of other collectivisms.

The one thing on which a democratic collectivism cannot afford to compromise is the principle of an unlimited opposition. To rule without it is to rule with a stick. To rule without it is a mark of political indolence and immaturity, and of a basic distrust of one's own social program. The party system and the party struggle must become the center of politics, as distinguished from the process of economic control and planning, the detailed work of which is best left to a corps of non-partisan experts. It is the party system, with its principle of free scope to the opposition, that represents the most reliable safeguard against the disease and corruption of power.

There is one advantage that a planned collectivism will have in this respect over the present unplanned capitalist democracies. Once the economic tensions inherent in an unplanned economy are relieved, and once the struggle between the economic oligarchy and the democratic majority is resolved, the party system can function in a genuine clash of methods and objectives without leading always to the brink of civil war. As Harold Laski has pointed out, the parliamentary process is an ideal one as long as the conditions for social peace exist in a stable economy. Where the major parties, for all their disagree-

ment, still agree on the basic question of the economic constitution of society, they are willing to abide by the rules of the game in their struggles. But where the basic rules are themselves jeopardized by the tenacious sabotage of the oligarchs, parliamentary and party government is in a continual crisis. Our task is to re-establish the conditions of social peace through a rational system of economic controls, and thereby to re-establish the possibility of party government.

## NOTE TO CHAPTER EIGHT

The issue of the internal transfer of power, held in suspension by the war, continues to be the crucial issue for the future of the democratic state. Whether this must be essentially a class transfer, or whether it can be a transfer from the possessing to the functional groups in a society remains a problem for history to settle. Whether it can be accomplished without violence (in Laski's phrase, "revolution by consent") is also in the lap of the future. Nor has our political theory worked out in any detail the techniques of organization, education, persuasion, political and economic change, international organization, which the transition period is likely to involve.

The persistent fear of power in and for itself still lingers. And yet there have been at least two indications that the trend may be away from the paralysis of fear in the face of the fact of power. One is the example of Russia's role in the war. We are likely to hear ever less of the familiar liberal dictum that the habitual concentration of power in Russia has eaten away the national fiber. Even liberals may come to understand what Jefferson once said—that "the revolution of Mr. Burke is much more sanguinary than the revolution of the French people." Secondly, we are beginning to understand the truth of

Machiavelli's dictum—that no nation ever lost its liberty by submitting willingly to the rule of leaders of its own choice. We are, in short, beginning to understand that power is inherently neutral, and that there are situations when its absence may be even more corrupting than its concentration.

There were many in 1942 who still feared that the progressives would, by the exercise of power, become corrupted by it. But the deeper trend lay in the emergence of a New Guard both in England and in America, whose aim was not to fight the transfer of power from privileged groups to government officials but themselves to get into the strategic government posts. This brought into an even sharper focus the issue of great leadership and how to get it. The anti-fascist powers during the second great war had, in the persons of Roosevelt, Willkie, Churchill, Cripps, Stalin, Chiang Kai-shek, and Nehru, a leadership as impressive as that of any coalition group in history. Nevertheless it was clear that if our strength was to be organized effectively we had to clear away from the channels of social mobility the obstructions that stand against the career of talent, and learn to tap the energies of the classes which have not yet had access to power.

But many will think the persistent question still remains as to controlling the controllers. *Quis custodiet custodes?* My own answer in the light of the social experience of the past five years still lies away from the merely mechanical controls such as legislative checks and judicial review. I should be more inclined to emphasize the greatness of the leadership and the relation (which Tolstoy dwells on in *War and Peace*) between the leader and the spirit of the collectivity. I should emphasize also the need for an autonomous tradition of democratic responsibility in administrative groups. And I should point finally, and most importantly, as Rousseau did long ago and Jefferson after him, to the indispensable ethos of a people, which alone can make great leadership possible.

## CHAPTER NINE

# HUMANISM FOR THE MILLIONS

1. *Beyond Politics to Humanism*
2. *The Élite and the Common Man*
3. *Horizontal and Vertical Humanism*

## 1. BEYOND POLITICS TO HUMANISM

NOTHING that I have thus far discussed in this book would have any great meaning if it constituted a value in and for itself. The planning of the national income, the mechanisms of government, the organization of power: one must ask about all of them—*cui bono*? They are fine playthings in themselves—necessary in sustaining life, in keeping it from becoming brutal, in staving off chaos. But just as John A. Hobson, like John Ruskin before him, has never tired of reiterating that economics means nothing if it deals only with natural resources and machines, but must include within its scope human resources as well, and must discuss the values that machines serve; so we may apply a similar viewpoint to politics. What is politics for?

John Stuart Mill, with the simplicity of despair, once wrote that all the machines that had been invented had not lightened the labor of human beings by a day. That was the most damning thing that has been said about the art of capitalist economics. If something similar could be said of the art of politics—if it could be said that all the democratic effort, the perilous career of the crisis state, the anguished attempts to hold our world together and keep it from war and collapse, would succeed only in maintaining the status quo but would not alleviate the lot of a single human being—it would be the most damning thing that could be said about politics. If a

planned economy, even under democratic collectivism, were to produce merely a more orderly and mechanized world, without stress and friction but also without a joyousness and a heightened feeling of creation, then a planned economy would be only a cold achievement in blueprints. The state is not only power. It is not only order. It is also creativeness and comradeship and warm human decency.

That is why we must go beyond politics to humanism. Without humanism, politics may be a fascinating chessboard of stratagems and maneuverings, with human lives and national destinies as the pawns. But it is not the thing that has fired the imaginations and enlisted the energies of men since the beginning of the state. With all our striving it is a culture that we want to build, and not an empty hulk. What counts is, as I have indicated before, not merely the fact that a healthy and varied culture is a form of insurance against the abuse of power. That is in itself an important fact. But what is more important is that power itself is meaningless unless it is harnessed to the uses of a significant culture.

But what, we may ask, is a significant culture? Are there any tests for cultural greatness? And is any price too high to pay for it? Rousseau, when he was a young man, once wrote a melancholy prize essay to prove that cultural greatness went often with social decline, as in the decadent Spain of the Inquisition, with its summit achievements in art and literature. And Thomas Mann in his highly individualist days wrote in *Death in Venice* that beauty was rooted in death and injustice. Both conceptions interpret cultural greatness and aesthetic creation in terms of the accident of individual genius. That is an important part of it but by no means the whole. The quality of a culture must, of course, be sought in the achievements of isolated individuals, in the level of creativeness of an *élite*; but it must above all be sought in the conditions of the living and striving of the mass. What I shall set down here must in no

sense be considered as claiming to be anything but one man's impressions of the criteria of a great culture. The important thing is not that these criteria will differ with the individual setting them down. The important thing is that there are criteria, and that along with the differences there will also be an impressive body of agreement.

First of all, joy in work and in the conditions of work. One of the severest indictments of our capitalist industrialisms is the joylessness of work under them, the dead monotony of producing not things but parts of things, not values for oneself but value for someone else, not things requiring skill of hand and resulting in pride of craft but vendible products for an unenvisaged market. And with joy in work, joy in play and leisure. The problem in today's cultures, we are told by college presidents and speakers at women's clubs, is the organization of leisure. That is a pious lie, which obscures the enormous gains that have still to be made in lifting the national income before one can speak of leisure; but even more a lie because there can be no leisure without security. A frightened animal does not play; neither can a frightened human being. With security, however, a society can proceed to the organization of leisure and the giving of scope to play. And its play must be not only the passive public amusements, where the masses are not participants but only spectators; it must also be the collective organization of energy overflowing into expression. Third, and closely related, is mass artistic enjoyment, but especially the development of a nation of amateurs in every field of art. Fourth, the more professional literary and artistic productions of individuals. One of the severest indictments of the pretensions of the fascists that they are building a culture is the fact that thus far none of the fascist regimes has produced a contemporary literature or art or drama that deserves to be even mentioned alongside the pre-fascist achievements in Germany, Italy, and Austria. Fifth, the presence of wide individual di-



vergence within the culture, the freedom to follow up one's aptitudes, the career open to talent. Sixth, the acceptance of minority groups and the encouragement of cultural autonomy and cultural divergences. Seventh, the social equality of the sexes. It was George Meredith who wrote, in his *Essay on Comedy*, that there can be no great social comedy written in a culture where women are regarded as chattels rather than as equal protagonists in the play of wit and the conversation of life; and his remark may be taken as symbolic of the values that lie beyond comedy as well. Eighth, the gentleness and care shown for children—the links that a culture has with the future. Ninth, the sanctity and uncheapness of human life. Tenth, the values set upon physical health and beauty. Eleventh, the social conditions for mental health, and the treatment of criminals. Twelfth, the sense of collective unity and cohesiveness of striving. And, finally, the fundamental respect for science and rational thought.

These add up to what I mean by humanist values in a culture. I use the term *humanism* not in any precise philosophical sense but with an intentional breadth of reference to the decencies of a human society. Humanism as a strict philosophical system comes, as I understand it, somewhere between materialism and supernaturalism. It had some vogue during the days when the Darwinian advance sent a trembling through the philosophical world, and it was intended as a sort of mediating category in the reconciliation of science and religion—a half-way house between Darwin and God. I do not intend it in that sense. But today the concept of humanism has received a fresh force from the new insights we have gained into the compulsives of the machine, the chaos of planlessness, the inhumanity of man to man, the irrationalisms of the new religions of race and the state. And humanism can once more be conscripted, in terms of such a context, into the role of a mediator between the claims of the individual to freedom and expres-

sion and the claims of the mass to social cohesiveness and survival.

But in such a mediating role, it must be emphasized that humanism must serve the mass as well as the individual. It has generally not been thought of in connection with the mass, just as democracy has seldom been thought of until our own generation in connection with collectivism. But part of our task in political thinking is to make new relations and break old ones. Despite the campaign against all the *isms* that has been inaugurated by our democratic pragmatists and that serves so well the uses of our undemocratic absolutists, it is still true that men can remain human under collectivism. The *I*, which we had always feared would be stifled under collectivism, does not need to be stifled. In fact, if one goes back to the criteria I have sought to sketch out for a humanist culture, the conditions for it are far more easily fulfilled in an economically secure and politically democratic collectivism than in an individualist economy and a polity ruled by the *élite*. Our task as builders of a culture is to create not a rarefied atmosphere for individual creation, but a humanism for the millions. If we succeed even tolerably in that, we need have no fears about individual creativeness.

## 2. THE ÉLITE AND THE COMMON MAN

The biggest obstacle that stands between us and such a concept of humanism is the esteem many of us feel for the *élites* of the world and the contempt that some of us still have for the common man. I have already discussed this in political terms in my earlier analysis of democracy; but it is worth some attention here in cultural terms.

The history of the *élite* as a ruling group is far longer and far more respectable than the history of the democratic majority. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *élite* should also have claimed for itself a similar cultural primacy, and should have considered civilization in a unique way and to a peculiar degree their own trusteeship. The reasoning has started with the rather sensible proposition, as its major premise, that government must rest on intelligence; and then has quietly asserted, as a minor premise, that intelligence is necessarily limited to the few; from which it has marched to the conclusion that government must rest on the select few. The undistributed middle, of course, from a strictly logical standpoint, is the term "intelligence." If it means wealth, success, and formal education, the minor premise is justified. If, however, it means something closer to social intelligence and therefore more widely distributed among the sons of Adam, the whole syllogism crashes to the ground.

America, as the most thoroughgoing democracy of the past, has, on the whole, prided itself upon not possessing such an *élite*. Yet both Lord Bryce and E. L. Godkin have pointed to the existence of a social *élite* in America—not Tocqueville's *élite* of the legal profession—and have lamented the refusal of the electorate to put them into office. In fact, the whole Mugwump movement in the Republican Party, of which Godkin was a leader and Bryce a foreign fellow-traveler, was pretty much dedicated to the proposition that politics was an animal that should be rescued from the muck of the common man and allowed to roam in the heavenly pastures of the *élite*. The fact that they failed to see clearly was that while, with the exception of the State Department and the diplomatic service, we have not given our rich and well-bred men public office, we have none the less allowed them to put their henchmen into office. The curious thing is that an electorate that would howl with anguish at a du Pont or a Morgan in high office, lets them

nevertheless dominate the inner party councils that select the men for whom it shall vote. Having made the proper obeisance to our gods, we surrender the world not to the devils but to their deputies.

Much the same applies to the creative efforts of the *élite* in the non-political sphere. Taking Fisher Ames's classic definition of the American *élite* as "the wise, the rich, and the good," one must point out that the wise have rarely been the rich, and that the rich have almost never been the good. There are, then, several crevices in the concept. But the crevices have been repaired by the fact that the rich have been able by their wealth to hire the profundities of the wise and conscript the virtue of the good; they have made subsidiaries both of the universities and—to an extent, at least—of the church. The *élite* manages thus to present a united front in the cultural realm, its disunities soldered by the precious metals. Thought and criticism in such a culture have tended to be a form of numismatics, their task being to evaluate the achievements of the culture by the shape and color of its coins.

The interesting thing is that the middle class and even the workers themselves have been inclined to accept the creative role of the *élite* at its own rating. They have done so chiefly because they have been under the spell of the ideas that took the shape of the prevailing class alignment. And one of the most reiterated of those ideas was the irrationality and cultural incompetence of the common man. Nor has this notion come wholly from convictions about the irrationality of human nature or, more specifically, political behavior. For if the ideas were as comprehensive as that, they would include all men within their ambit—rich and poor alike, *élite* or common man—since they all share equally whatever characteristics one would set down in the social psychology of the political animal. One would expect it to be a universal and not a class concept. Actually it has been a class concept and not a uni-

versal. For our timonism is not catholic; it embraces only the masses. Those whose political rationality we doubt are never the possessors of the earth, the barons of opinion; they are the poor and the uneducated. And since we do not want to put our universals in terms of such contingent factors as wealth and education, we have had to resort to an ingenious subterfuge—the creation of a special theory of the mob mind and the psychology of crowds. And we have decked that theory out with the tinsel trimmings of scientism: that it is not the human animal as we know him who becomes irrational when he acts in unison with his fellows, but that there is something called the “mob mind” or “mass mind,” something which is mystically more than the sum of its parts, and which can therefore be assigned the irrationality that the human animal not acting in a mass does not have.

Having thus placed the masses in the category of the irrational and hysterical, it is but a step to deny them creative force. To write out of the common man’s experience, about his struggles, in his language, through his eyes and mind, becomes thus a kind of barbarism, wholly lacking in aesthetic and permanent values. A cultural place in the social scheme is reserved for the common man only by the “folk” theorists, who are enabled by classifying him with the folk to treat him as one might treat a lovable child or a happy savage—with a condescending recognition that this sub-human has emotions and passions, can use his hands in the arts and crafts without benefit of academy, can reach for lyrics and ballads out of the well of his common experience, that, in short, this curious dog doth dance.

But all that is in the idle realm of art. How explain the aspirations of the common man toward fashioning his own destiny, seizing political power, building a new society? Clearly, in this realm he must be aping his betters. And so we have Friedrich Nietzsche, projecting perhaps his own mad frustra-

tion at not being born an aristocrat, and his theory of *ressentiment*. It is a theory that has become the basis of most of the attacks upon socialist and populist movements. They are born, we are told, of spite and envy and hate. They are the product of an underlying population that, out of its anger at being denied the amenities of civilization, is willing to destroy the structure of civilization itself. No doubt some such envy, some such desire to increase one's stature, enters into all bids for power—those of the rich as well as the poor. Much of the brutality shown by the fascists and their supporters to the radical intellectuals in Germany, much of the hatred directed against *Kulturbolscheismus*, must have been swelled by the bitterness of the capitalists toward a group which, without the accredited means for having a good time, did manage so unmistakably to get fun out of life. Some element of *ressentiment* must then enter into every class bid for power. But to think of the common man as motivated wholly by this envy, as incapable of social constructiveness, of the desire for a measure of rationality in society, of the dream of a Golden Age in the future, is a sign of the arid imagination of the *élite*.

There has, however, been, even among the *élite*, another and far different intellectual strain—that of Bentham and Comte, of Emerson, Ruskin, and William Morris, of Walt Whitman and Count Leo Tolstoy. Their writings have opened vistas of the possibilities of democratic cultural achievement. They have seen the mass as a creative force—some of them, like Tolstoy, as the only creative force in a culture. Tolstoy called the common men “tickets of history.” Generals, statesmen, thinkers—they were only puppets to register the will and morale and aspirations of the vast armies of the common man. Tolstoy was an absolutist in his ideas. But there is enough truth in this one to make us extremely skeptical of the notion that civilization is a trusteeship of the *élite*. There is enough truth in it to hold out an appreciable hope for the

reserve force of the common man, and his ultimate capacity to set his society in order.

### 3. HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL HUMANISM

Like most important words, "education" conceals as much meaning as it reveals. We use it to lump together all sorts of enlargements of experience and all degrees of social enlightenment. In its social implications it can be at one extreme quietistic and at another revolutionary. No matter what the pace of social change and construction in the calculable future, the gains that are made in the political and economic realm must be accompanied by the broad educational effort that I have called "humanist culture."

But it is important to distinguish two types of advance in the winning of humanism for the millions. One is extensive, the other intensive. One may be called *horizontal humanism*, the other *vertical humanism*. Both involve enlargements of cultural experience and human awareness for the main body of a culture. Both are important, but they should not be confused with each other.

At the present time it is horizontal humanism that offers the most exciting vistas for the planned economies and the democratic crisis states. It involves the extension of the same level of cultural experience to new and additional increments of the population. It makes thus available to them the more easily communicable heritage of past cultural achievement. The prime example is the heroic liquidation of illiteracy in the Soviet Union. Similar in its impact, although in another historical period, was the creation of the American free public school system. This is the sort of humanism also that the radio

and the moving pictures involve. And this is the sort of humanism that is involved today in the efforts of the WPA Federal Theater to make available the best of the theater tradition to millions who had never before had a chance to see plays, and in the efforts of the TVA to bring modern light and power and sanitation and science and the whole magic world that these provide for outlying mountain communities in the South.

It will be apparent that the important elements in what I call horizontal humanism are two. First is the process of technological constructiveness which makes possible new potential living standards and facilitates access to these standards through the improvement of communications. The second is the social constructiveness that organizes means of bringing these standards to the largest possible number of people. Most social reform aims at this sort of horizontal extension of the best elements of a culture to the large masses in that culture that have not yet caught up with it. It is exciting both to watch and to participate in.

Vertical humanism is something different. Its values are not quantitative but qualitative. It deals not with accessibility so much as with social creativeness. It is a far less tangible, a far more elusive, form of social advantage than the other; yet upon it depends the ultimate greatness of a culture. The Soviet Union, for example, has thus far seemed less successful with the second than with the first. They print, for example, millions of copies of a book, whereas we print only thousands. But are their books better? They have more people in their technical schools and their schools of higher learning than do the English and French in proportion to population, but are their schools better? In terms of horizontal humanism, Jeremy Bentham, with his social constructiveness and his utilitarian doctrine of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, was one of the important innovators. But in terms of vertical humanism, we must turn to Thoreau and Thomas Mann, to the more solitary



prophets and the more intensive cultivators of the human spirit.

On the level of horizontal humanism, the collective efforts in control and planning are the basic and inevitable methods. But once the culture has caught up with its forerunners, like the main body of an army being brought up to support the positions captured by the vanguard, there is occasion once again for the individual to assert himself. In that sense, collectivism can never be the ultimate of cultural achievement, but only the indispensable condition for the flowering of the individual talent and for the inexplicable assertions of the individual genius. Here, beyond the ranks where the collectivity can penetrate, pierces the sharp dart of scientific insight into the mysteries of nature. Here belong the probings of philosophy and religion, the glowing creative force of poetry.

This is not to narrow in any sense the need and scope for what I have spoken of as a planned collectivism, or the urgency of a militant democracy. Art and thought must have the same militancy as political and economic effort. But while their militancy for the immediate future must concentrate on the desperate struggle for the sheer survival of the cultural tradition, their militancy for the long perspectives of the future must be turned inward to the imaginative extension of life. Thus only will that survival have meaning.

**EPILOGUE:  
HISTORY  
IS WRITTEN BY THE  
SURVIVORS**



## EPILOGUE

### HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE SURVIVORS

**W**E tend to console ourselves in these distracted times with the reflection that our trouble cannot last; that the enemies of democratic humanism are doomed by the constellation of historic forces; that the dictators of today must crash as the dictators of the past have inevitably crashed. We write works on the Greek tyrants and Caesar and Genghis and Napoleon to reinforce the moral, and we point to the patent impossibility that the ethic of the knuckle-duster and the bludgeon will finally triumph.

All this is very well. It is good to act with a belief in yourself—provided that you act. It is good to gird yourself in the armor of a faith, and to march to the stirring notes of some poetic democratic myth—provided that the march is not merely a processional, and that at the end of it you are ready, if need be, to fight. The danger is that, having concluded that the long-run forces of history are on our side, we shall not stir ourselves to act within the framework of those forces and so translate tendencies into realities. We err if we act on impulse or for action's sake, with disregard of the lines of force discernible in history. But we err also if we trust blindly to the impersonal forces of history, whether the trust be that of the idealist who sees in the logic of events the divine triumph of truth, or the materialist who sees in it the ruthless march of technological imperatives. Actually the so-called "lessons" of history are for the most part the rationalizations of the victors. History is written by the survivors.

That is why it will be scant consolation for the democracies to go down to extinction still believing in the ultimate rightness of their cause. And that is why the first imperative of democratic humanism is to survive. There is no question here of setting up a cult of the survivor, no question of celebrating self-preservation as a form of individual or group egoism. Survival is not the be-all of life. If it were, an intransigent pacifism would be the only tenable credo. Nor is survival the test of the possession of great qualities, by either the individual or the group; the belief in such a test marked the degradation of nineteenth-century thought as expressed in the social Darwinism of the "survival of the fittest," as made into a system of social thought by Herbert Spencer; it is also one of the marks of twentieth-century fascism. I have in mind survival only in an instrumental sense. Democratic society, whatever its moral and cultural superiority, must first survive if it is to fulfill its function in world history. It must survive to write the history of its struggles; for it is the historian, in the role of the poet mythologizing the past, who is the effective architect of the future.

But the need for survival should not mean a case of democratic jitters. As I write, the world is in an ungentle mood. The result is the crisis psychology of our time, with its characteristic brink-of-war and brink-of-fascism mentality. Anything, we feel, may happen any day. Each day may spell the difference between the *status quo* and disaster. Such an attitude is possible only if you lack the historical sense. Where there is so pervasive and continued a sense of crisis, with small things and large seen on the same plane, there is no true perception of the nature of crisis. Such a sense of strain is alien to the cool-headed detachment necessary to evaluate the events that are taking place and the forces we must reckon with. The truer perspective is that of the military campaign, where perspective means neither fright nor indifference, but the mapping out

of objectives and obstacles, the calculation of probable losses, the concentration of strength at the critical points.

We owe to Justice Holmes the notion of "the campaign of history." History is a long-drawn, far-flung series of engagements, in which in any generation some class or nation or leader may be strategic and determine the fortunes of the whole campaign. But while the military figure is suggestive, we must not make the mistake of thinking of war itself as the most important part of the campaign of history.

For our generation the question of war and peace is mainly relevant because it sets the framework of our other activities. A precipitous war, engulfing the world, will engross the energies that might have gone into the task of democratic construction. But a war long deferred yet finally not avoided, timed by the dictators so as to catch the democracies when they are most divided and demoralized and the fascists when they are unified and prepared, may be even more catastrophic. War even under the most favorable circumstances solves no problems. Its importance lies only in the fact that it may set the framework of our efforts in each of those national units in which we must work out our destiny in the calculable future. A war or a peace that results in a fascist world hegemony will doom everything that democratic humanism has accomplished, and everything it looks forward to. And while there may be a possibility in the ultimate future that even a triumphant fascism, as an unstable economic form, will finally resolve itself into some more stable form of socialism and allow for a rekindling of the democratic effort, such a possibility would be pushed into a future so indefinite as to run almost in terms of geologic time. Meanwhile, the price we should have to pay would be Cathay-cycles of barbarism.

Even a war or a peace that resulted in a democratic triumph would be in itself no social solution. It would mean, however, the space of another generation or two snatched for the task

of democratic construction. This task, for all the currently fashionable irrationalism, does lend itself to human and rational effort. It simplifies history to attribute its trends and events wholly to human will or blind chance or inevitable determinisms. History is a long campaign in which the underlying factors are the imperatives of technology, the drives of class relations, the logic of social institutions, the ingrained habits and traditions of nations. But within that long campaign the day-to-day battles may turn on factors of contingency or chance, on individual generalship and bravery, on the forced march and the sustained attack, on the scientific planning of strategy and the precision of carrying it out. Machiavelli's formula for history—as made up of *virtù*, *fortuna*, *necessità*—still remains, when translated into our own corresponding concepts, the most adequate. It is our task to understand the nature of the underlying imperatives, to take contingencies into account, to summon our best strength and will in working within the framework they make for us.

Seen in such terms, the task of democratic construction lies within the compass of social possibility. Today it depends upon the survival of the crisis states, the control of the forces of economic disintegration, the maintenance of democratic procedures and attitudes. Tomorrow it may mean the meeting of a counter-revolutionary threat. The day after tomorrow it means the transformation of capitalist democracy into a democratic planned collectivism.

Much depends on our recognition of time as a factor in our destiny. "Time is real," T. E. Hulme once said, "for the individual, but not for the race." He said it because, like his master Sorel, he was reacting against the doctrine of progress. But we do not live in the roaring optimistic days; it would be a melancholy superfluity to berate the doctrine of progress in an age in which men's sensibilities have corroded, both East and West—an age in which the Japanese code of Bushido has

ended in the bombing of defenseless cities, and the culture that produced Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* has turned not only anti-Jewish but anti-Enlightenment and anti-science. Time does exist, for the group as for the individual. It is over the course of time that economies are transformed, politics move toward greatness or decay, cultures are brutalized or achieve maturity. It is only over the long span of time that we can hope to build a democratic world, and rivet the dignity of the common man into the framework of history. It is, meanwhile, only in the breathing-spells we snatch from the pressure of reaction that we can strive to put up the scaffolding that will allow us to repair and preserve the democratic tradition.

If there is a note of urgency in what I have written, it is because time, as the lawyers say, is of the essence of our problem. Before the crisis-democracies can be transformed into socialized collectivisms they must first survive. They must survive against the anarchy of unplanned capitalism, the concentration of corporate power, the sabotaging efforts of reactionary business, the incipient fascist movements within, the aggressive fascist imperialisms without. What is needed, to make our efforts effective, is not a crisis mentality but a sense of timing—a calculation of where we are, how long we dare delay, where and how we must act decisively.

On a clock-tower in a Spanish square is written—so the story runs—“It Is Later Than You Think.” The implications are religious and admonitory; the command to prepare in this world for the judgment in the next. On a wall in Paris on the eve of the Revolution, some *sans-culotte* scrawled the same words in French. The implications are again admonitory, but the judgment promised is man-made rather than God-made. Today the words need to be neither religious nor revolutionary, but secular and constructive. They are meant to clarify our sense of political timing.

I use them in several connected senses. First, we have in



many respects already gone farther than is generally supposed in moving toward economic collectivism. But, secondly, the accumulation of weaknesses and tensions in our economic system and our social order has also gone farther than is generally supposed, and the danger to our democratic humanist traditions is accordingly greater. Third, the need for firm, decisive, sustained action to stave off collapse and finish the job of socialization is more immediate and more pressing than is generally supposed.

Finally, we have gone farther than one might think in a recognition of the democratic bonds between men. In France, England, America, Spain, China, the Scandinavias, Mexico, the common man is glimpsing that what ties him to men like himself in other crisis-democracies is greater than what ties him to the ruling economic groups in his own country, and greater even than what ties the fascists of all countries together. We have one thing to thank the fascists for. In order to meet their threat, and the threat of the social collapse out of which fascism emerges, we have not only been spurred to unexampled national efforts of mass organization and administrative control, but we have had to cut across national boundaries as never before in the history of nations. The beginnings of this trans-national fellowship are slight, but they are beginnings. It is a fellowship not of military need or social hatred, but of the common human values of ordinary men everywhere.

It is not much that we ask of our era—only a chance to consolidate and continue the affirmative achievements of science and intellectual freedom in human history, to provide an enlargement of human life for the masses, to provide a base from which individuals can explore the possibilities of human effort. We want no *daimon* of Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, no superman of Nietzsche—only human men rising to the fullest stature of which they are capable.



















